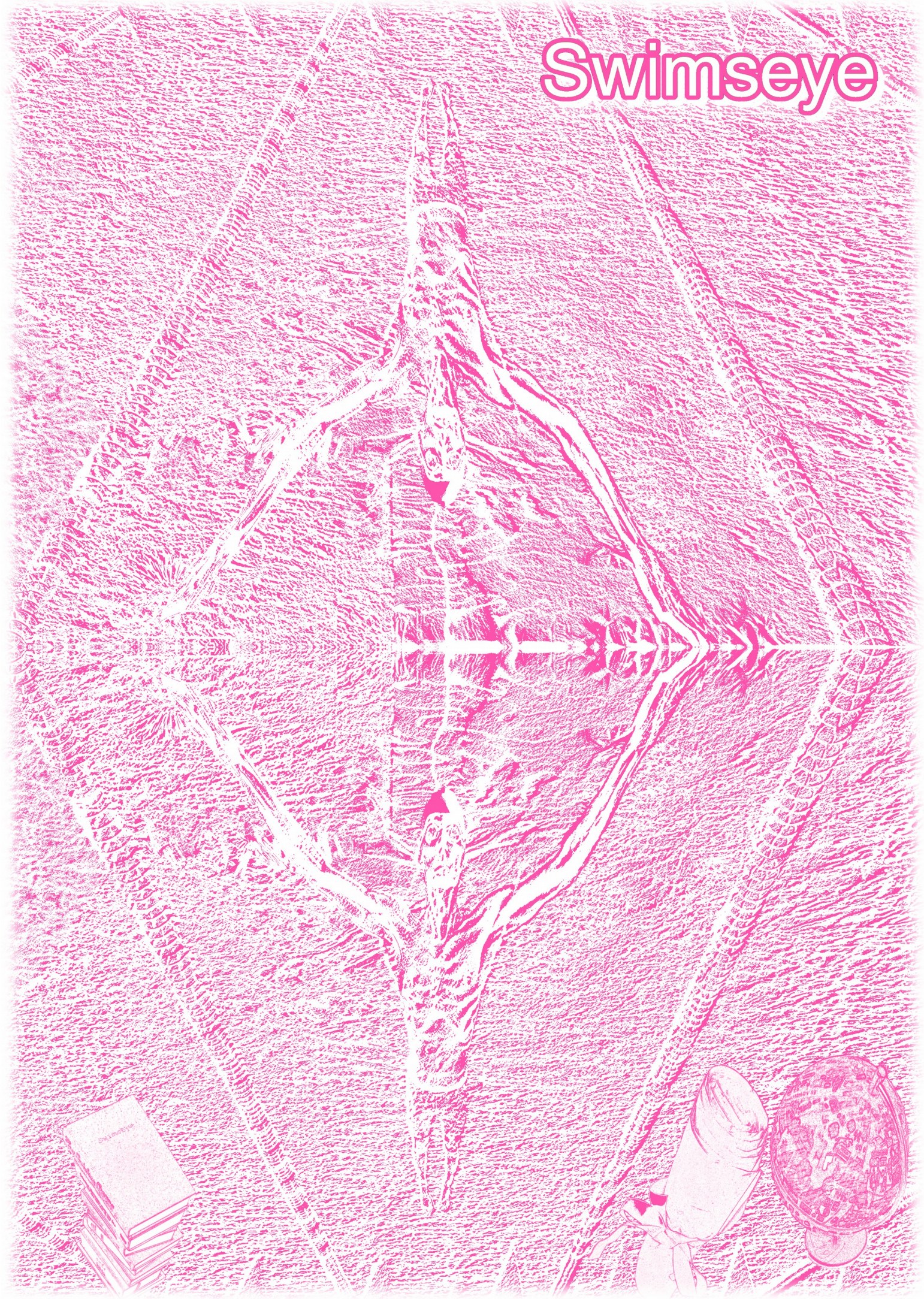


Swimseye



SWIMSEYE

by

Tam Li

2015

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SWIMSEYE

Names and Games

"Sue, I've got this brilliant idea to make some money. I don't know if to ask Coach or do you think he has too much on? He is already getting harassed and stressed by lots of people. If I don't ask him, being our swim Coach, he may be offended that I did not ask?"

"Well spit it out Ives. What is it?"

"My idea is... erm, when are we due?"

"Blue top."

"Tell you when we get back." Looking like a mobilized column of army-ants, one after another the five in the lane elegantly push of the wall to a six length swim.

"How many have we done?" Katherine asks on their return. Katherine knows all too well they have swum eight lots of six-length swims, but the poor thing constantly doubts herself.

"I make it eight." Sue kindly reassures. Before Katherine can predictably comfort herself by asking how many sixes in total they are swimming, Ives continues,

"I have invented a gameshow that I want televised. I want this pool to host it and hopefully we may all get a bit of money out of the idea, meaning us and the pool." The red-hand on the large clock displaying seconds skirts the twenty-past mark; they in turn surge off the wall for number nine out of twelve six-length swims. Ives was not obsessed with money or with trying to get not-poor. Whilst studying he has painfully gone from one terrible part-time job to another and this invention is what he imagines to be an honest and proper way of making a living.

"Go on." Sue, in the water dangling off the tiled wall, aspirates through exertion.

"You've seen Bullseye, well this—"

"Hang on. Slow down. What did you say?"

"You know that Bullseye, the darts gameshow, from the beige-days, it's like that but for swimming. Full of all different clever challenges which will encourage the nation to swim and..." Ives proclaims proudly, "It will be called Swims-eye!" Sue chortled at Ives's mannerism and slightly camp staunchness.

"Very good! Tell me more when we get back." Sue rushing her

response.

"I am shocked. It is good. You need to choose a better name. – Ha ha. Don't look at me like that. I didn't pick it." Katherine typically honestly tells Ives as he pushes off for number ten.

[Bullseye S04E01 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4iSI4LKHC_8] With an average of twenty-seconds talk time between each six-length swim, Ives gives a brief outline of his first ideas for the show. After they had finished that set of twelve swims, Ives gets back to his original point of whether he should ask Mint, their Coach, to help make it happen.

Nobody wants to provide Ives with a definitive answer so Ives quickly and quietly voices his thoughts as the Coach is now walking over to explain the next set.

"Coach has been so stressed-out with work and NOW we can blame Lane-Larcenist-Lindsey for giving him more grief by robbing a lane from us on Wednesdays." At this point the whole lane, listening, shake their head and laugh at Ives's description of Lindsey.

"What's that?" The Coach up-above on the side of the pool not quite hearing what the joke was.

"Him calling Lindsey, Lane-Larcenist-Lindsey." Sue explains. Katherine is still laughing.

Their swim club, called Coynus Cads, is the only native swim club to their council's Criffud swimming pool. Smarmy swimmers from other swim clubs call Criffud pool 'Tart-of-the-Shire'. The name arose from the pool's admitted tendency to spread its doors to any club with money. Loyal members of the public and Coynus Cads are the ones to suffer. Swimming lanes get taken from them or the depth of half the pool is decreased to seventy centimetres to accommodate children's private lessons. The bosses have even taken Tuesday nights from the Coynus club, giving priority to adult swim lessons and to rival swim clubs of which three other clubs lease nights there. In addition the local university is there for a year whilst their own private pool is renovated. The council manager enjoying the pimp-mindset derides the regular, normal customers and the steadfast (and fast) Coynus Cads who have had to learn how to rough-it: swimming, tumble-turning and dolphining in seventy centimetre water.

The last two years especially have been a war of attrition for poor

Coach Mint. Mint is kind and a sensitive gentleman. The type of man horrid people zestfully take advantage of. He is not the sort of person to scream and shout: Coach Mint can never be heard yelling at his swimmers. He gets the best out of them using his intelligence and people-skills developed from working in a school for over thirty years. Dolefully from what they have seen Jimmy, a young adult swimmer, and Coach Mint frequently have cathartic conversations. Last week Jimmy was lecturing his more tolerant Coach, "Loud mouth thugs are the only type of character the carnival-of-clowns-on-snow running the council-facilities listen to." Thankfully in contrast to the managers Coach Mint is, the best word to describe him is maybe, 'avuncular'. He always has a fresh joke to cheer-up people or a kind and wise-ear listening to people's problems and he is an excellent swimming coach and teacher. No-one who knew him would change him for the world. But as a very sad reflection of the society in which we live is the fact people frequently take advantage of his good nature. As an example, the pool-staff for the last year have been cruel to him. Deceiving the poor man to think he would be made redundant but with no intention to. They successfully planned and schemed Coach would then be grateful for the offer of being able keep his job but with worse hours and pay. The same with his beloved Coynus Cads; the management lying to him he was going to lose them, but instead doubling the price of the already unfair member's pay structure, taking a night from them and now Lindsey withdrawing a lane on Wednesday nights. The lane is being used for the pool's accredited swim club, called Bridgert. Lindsey gets overtime for taking them an extra hour each week. Coynus Cads is a spin-off club from Bridgert. Coach Mint did a lot for Bridgert until a dispute between the Coaches severed links between the two.

Coynus Cads are all of the opinion if they kick up too much of a fuss the council will shut the club down forever as they feel the bosses are looking for any excuse to get rid of them. The wide range of swimmers there would end up as bitter kids who hang around the streets and unfit acrimonious adults. All the regular members of the public have concurred the current manager is deliberately dilapidating the Centre, driving customers away so then they can say, 'there is not many customers so we may as well close the place down'. After the New-Year's day when New-year revolutionists are

looking to sign up to gyms, Criffud sorely smelt of cooked urine.

Now, at the end of today's swim session Ives has cast his decision. Getting permission for the show would initially involve working with, what he considered, the sordid rapacious managers; due to that, he decided only to get the Coach involved in the plenty of fun stuff in the future. Ives surmised this left the only one alternative with both the skills and knowledge to assist him in getting the show up and running; the swimming co-ordinator he knew as Lane-Larcenist-Lindsey.

Lindsey was a few, maybe up to seven, years older than Ives. Anyone who spent longer than ten minutes getting to know her are fond of Lindsey. She is tender-hearted and fair. Plus she is dedicated to her benevolent job. No-one is quite sure how old she is. Lindsey is paid well for her job. The downside to her tricky job is that she is caught in the middle trying to appease the public and the management. At times the management have manipulated Lindsey to put her name to things incongruous with her morality. The unemployment of others close to her have milled her resolute to keep this well paying job.

Lindsey and Ives have been passing polite conversation between each other for almost a year. They do not know each other well. Ives conventionally endeavours to be cool around Lindsey due to his huge crush on her best friend, Lucy. Lucy worked in the pool as a Lifeguard and as a children's swim teacher. Ives did not manage to woo Lucy. His excuses to himself for his failure included: Oaths; he wondered if there was some oath preventing Lifeguards from dating their customers. Inconvenience; he did not want to try coming-on too strongly as he never wanted to be awkward going to the pool as his swimming career may suffer. Practicality; he never managed to develop a rapport with her. He also has a handful more of less-cogent excuses for his failure. Although he readily admits what is probably the truth, Lucy was totally out of his league. Ives did not mind saying he is not currently a great catch. He is comfortable there is no shame or hiding that he's not currently, career wise, that promising. He is in the lower leagues. There is shame in not being true to yourself. Ives is convinced being true to his creative inner will both bring him enlivenment and the corresponding money

rewards. Ives aspires soon he will be able to swoon a girl as a Premiership player, either through his success at swimming or now through Swimseye. Ever since he was a kid Ives has listened to songs relating to success such as Kanye West's 'Gold Digga' sometimes and often sometimes. [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6vwNcNOTVzY>] Anyway, lovely Lucy ended up going to Egypt for a year to teach ex-pat kids to swim.

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First Plan

Tonight is Monday. After those few days of evaluation, hoping the heavy rain has stopped when he wakes, Ives is in bed, teeth brushed but on his laptop searching the internet. He is frustrating himself by not being able find any production companies that accept script submissions. Ives is counting on the fact that evidence of companies receptive to ideas would add weight to his proposal when talking to Lindsey. On the internet the only thing he can find is an intermediate business which privately posts ideas for production companies to browse. The site says it offers 'protection of concepts' for the person posting ideas but charge exorbitantly. More than Ives can afford or is willing to pay until he has further developed his idea. Primarily he needs reassurance from someone impartial in the pool business that his idea is not stupid. Now in the darkness, the computer off, warm in his bed, Ives does not want to sleep until he fathoms a plan to protect his ideas in case Lindsey larcenies them. He trusts all his friends in the swimming club. Not from personal experience, from what Ives has heard and seen of the world so far, he thinks in general it is best to mistrust people. Whilst he should be sleeping through this cynical-window his mind dismays him; trying to earn its keep his mind presents ideas of the managers getting so attached to the project, it will result in them believing in was their notion. Browsing the internet had some benefit: within half an hour the seeds it had planted germinate into three ideas Ives jots down in the dark:

- 1: *Pop a brief outline of the show in an envelope and post it recorded delivery to myself and leave unopened.*
- 2: *Give a copy to Dad's solicitor friend (Gary?) to date and keep. Cost?*
- 3: *Record the conversation with Lindsey when I'm telling her the idea. Check my mp3 will do this. Be covert!*

Satisfied, Ives turns his head onto the pillow to dream. His only slight frustration is 'Number One' and 'Number Two' make it best to wait until next week before he speaks to Lindsey to get help.

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Running Paper Coincidences

Tuesday morning, before the swim whilst they were waiting to get inside the building Katherine begins to tell them all a story, "Matt, you will never guess what happened last night! We were both in the centre early before swimming yesterday, I was doing my homework as usual and Matt was giving me some help." Katherine said the last sentence for the other's benefit. "Did you see the rain had nearly stopped by the time we got out of the pool? Running home, the last two-hundred metres, at the fields behind my house I was finishing with a Usain Bolt sprint. Alongside the path, escaping the brown puddles, I was sprinting on the grass. I could feel it getting more and more water logged, we call it green blancmange. There in front of me I seen the short grass was six inches under clear water. Like a cartoon I dug my heels in for me to stop. Because I was going so fast they went from under me. I skimmed fifteen-whole-foot flat on my back through the water; it felt like forever. It was freezing. I had the feeling of doing backstroke at one point. It cleaned the grey clay off my new pink running shoes and shorts. Ha ha! But ruined all the papers in my bag, including my geography home work. Everything else was in plastic. Sorry Matt." Her listening friends are not sure if she was telling the story for comedy or sympathy. "Only you." Sue tells Katherine. Matt lifts his mused gaze, "Any excuse to swim more than us!" The group had come to expect something funnier from Matt. "Do you need help again?" "No thanks: I remembered what we done and wrote it in the Chinese lesson."

For everybody the swim went well. Swimming ten metre sprints Matt felt he gave his muscles a good jolt. Ives felt the benefit of working his hip muscles in kick. No-one made any mention of the show.

Inspired by Bear Grylls, Coach taught all his swimmers to write down their goals and the steps to achieve them. Once indelibly there they were told to charge at them like rhinoceros. Making the best use of, 'non-swim night Tuesday' Ives puts on his psychological Bear Grylls rhino-horn. Recently Katherine's running prowess has impelled Ives

to run twice a week. He aims his Tuesday night run at Gary's house. Dressed in his running gear of thermal three-quarter tights hidden under the longest shorts he owns, whilst putting his shoes on, Ives ponders that he feels fortunate an ex-neighbour of his is a solicitor. Ives's Dad has kept in touch with Gary. His Dad would often help and advise Gary on DIY projects. Although Ives's Dad is not particularly close to the solicitor, Ives thinks they are friendly enough to keep a dated-copy for him, for free. Doing this will prove Ives was in possession of the idea before he spoke to Lindsey.

After knocking on the door of the capacious cream coloured detached house a surprised looking Gary opened the door and welcomed him in. Aside from 'hello' the first thing that comes out of Ives's mouth is an apology for his appearance. He then goes on to ask of Gary's and his young family's well-being. Afterwards, with a tone to make his request seem incidental, Ives inquires about holding onto the dated envelope. It was an unprecedented request for Gary. Once Ives explains the premise behind the gameshow Gary is very happy to oblige. Ives seeking to read subtle cues hypothesises Gary thinks it is all unimportant. Gary's wife, Colette, is affectionately making sure Ives was okay for drinks and was warm enough. The children are in bed asleep. Talking to Ives as a caring Auntie, Colette makes it her concern that Ives puts his undivided effort into his college-work. She too is a successful solicitor. Ives is trying not to grin too much at feeling esteemed by someone taking such a passionate interest in his academic career.

Gary said he will hold the envelope indefinitely for him for one pound. He said he best charge Ives the nominal fee of a pound so that legally they are being held for a client and not as friend. Ives left through Gary and Colette's porch with mixed feelings. Ives could not help but construe that Gary's facial expressions were illustrating his inner-opinion that the gameshow is silly and naïve. This liable derision went on to elicit a brazen pride. A pride in the fact he was striving to improve himself with an atypical ambition. Not too upset, running downhill towards a damp, heavily forested avenue with Druid remains, Ives chanted to himself, 'the only failure in life is failure to try'. Repeating the phrase louder than his own doubting thoughts silenced them. Running and pushing

his lung capacity Ives hopes will boost his swimming.

During the remainder of the week Ives works on developing his underwater swimming. He had been concentrating on all the other strokes; consequently his underwater dolphin had been neglected. His twenty-five metre underwater time is four seconds slower than his frontcrawl time. He wants his underwater to be at least three seconds faster. One of Ives's favourite inspirational videos on the internet is a relay race. It was a two-hundred metre freestyle Olympic final. Ryan Lochte on the last leg dives in nearly a body length behind the joint favourites, the French. Only making a few inches ground by the wall he turns still behind. Tracking the action the camera shows the French swimmer surface. The Frenchman swims another seven-metres and all of a sudden Ryan Lochte pops up level, neck-and-neck, at the fifteen metre mark. At the next turn he uses the same trick again and surfaces nearly a body length in front. [Lochte diving in at 6:12 on the video <https://youtu.be/qZt3wxzAvBI?t=6m12s>] Ives wants to be able to emulate Ryan Lochte's underwater menace. Through fear he is determined not to let the gameshow distract him from his swimming.

The dated envelope is now also in his possession although he foresees in a couple of months it will, more than likely, be misplaced.

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Changing Heads

In his jammers at the next Monday night swim, with a clear conscience and no recording mp3 player,

"Hi Jenny. Hi Lindsey."

"Hi ya." They respond in unison.

"Lindsey, could I ask you something quickly please?" Jenny continues walking to herd some children out of playing in the showers.

Lindsey, looking intrigued, smiles and eases her standing posture to cue she is ready to listen. Noticing the possibly new highlights in Lindsey's hair loses Ives's concentration. To be true to his thoughts he starts with, "Your hair looks nice."

"Nice? It's been soaked by all the kids." Lindsey runs her fingers through her light brown hair, doing her best to straighten her pool splashed hair.

"I mean the stripes, they look good, they suit you."

"Stripes?" Lindsey laughs out. Ives is worried he has offended her.

"yeah I got them done on the weekend."

"You're so lucky being a girl, able to show off your prettiness in all different ways. Highlights they are called aren't they?" Lindsey genuinely smiles and says,

"Thanks." If the first two sentences were both a faux pas Ives proudly judges the last sentence to be a good save. Lindsey simply does not know what to make of Ives. Back to more ill chosen words, "How are you for drive, err, gumption and time?" Lindsey makes a confused noise before asking,

"What?"

"Erm, basically how would you be fixed for taking on a project. A fun project? It won't take up too much time and there will be money in it for the centre renting the pool out and err, well that."

"Go on."

"I've invented a simple but tremendous gameshow which is going to be televised and this pool is excellent for the location and I think the staff would be proud to be involved. My next step is getting confirmation off a production company." Ives stuttered out without taking a breath.

"Unusual. I don't see why not, on paper. Yeah you could hire the pool. Obviously the manager will need to be consulted."

"Cool thanks, because I know he will be requiring all risk assessments done which, which, would be probably down to you."

"Before we get too deeply involved I'll see if he is open to the concept, then we'll sort out the details and I am intrigued to learn more about it."

"Thanks very much Lindsey. It'll be really good for lots of people."

The conversation between Lindsey and Ives was a bit short, not due to lack of enthusiasm on any part but it was not the place to get too deeply involved in the details. Lindsey, tired, was due to go home and Ives wanted to start swimming. Nevertheless Ives expected his revelation and Lindsey's response to be more dramatic and passionate.

Sue gives Ives a playful inquisitive look as he approaches the pool. Everyone except Ives is in the water waiting for the warm-up set.

"What were you jangling to Lindsey over? Have you charmed her to give us our lane back?"

"Ha ha, no." Ives's mind wanders for a split second, with the gameshow he had forgotten about the lost lane. Back on track, "I was asking Lindsey about the gameshow."

"What she say?" Sue asks. Before Ives has chance to answer, Jimmy contributes,

"Be chichi she doesn't steal a quarter of it." Then Katherine adds,

"You didn't tell her your crap name for it? Did you?" Ives protests,

"The name didn't come up. The name is not that bad."

"It's bad." Katherine reiterates.

"Well Katherine, I, I have already thought of other names. You might like them. SwimJim. Not gym as in gymnasium, Jim as in Jim Bowen, Bowman? The fella who hosted Bullseye."

"SwimGym, with a G is better." Ives does not think Katherine is right so asks her,

"But don't you think gyms are boring without any skill or fun? Also did you know the word gym comes from the Greek word gymnos for naked because they would exercise in the buff." Sue is tickled,

"Ha ha, that could be your thing. Why don't you consider selling the show to the Playboy Channel as porn. Us all swimming in the nip!"

Ives shakes his head in dismay and then at their sustained laughter. The only response he is able to muster is,

"Why? We, we are all practically naked anyway. And... I'm a male and didn't even know there is a Playboy channel - Sue-sbian."

"We have seen you on it buddy. In Heff's garden prancing around in your budgie-smugglers." Matt, finally joining in.

"Actually, you know, in my case they are eagle-concealers. And now I missed what Coach said what the warm up is." Ives has lost his place, everyone is pushing off the wall leaving only Matt behind, putting his goggles on, to tell him politely,

"Twelve-twelve-twelve buddy." It is hard to swim whilst laughing. A true swimmer without breaking their stroke can swim and; cough up a lungful of water, cry in their goggles, burp, sing, most things, but not swim and laugh. Coach Mint has no empathy and belief for this, for the first two lengths he was confused to why none of his fast-lane swimmers looked at all professional.

Ives, Sue and Jimmy are in the showers. Matt was already less wet, dressed in his work-suit and on his rushed way out to meet some friends. Their pool's three shower blocks consists of three showers in each. If there is no queue behind them, normally the swimmers do not rush out of the showers; they stand under the unreliable out-pouring until their inner-body batteries are charged enough to get them dressed and home. Still in their swimming costumes they talk. There is nothing unusual in regards to that. But when swimmers forget not to and describe to non-swimmers events such as, 'Katherine was arguing with me because I kept accidentally touching her feet, but, we made friends in the showers afterwards.' Although innocuous, non-swimmers do raise eyebrows.

"Sue, I was going to ask Lindsey to be a sidekick on the project basically split everything sixty-five thirty-five with her. In, erm, in mid-conversation I changed my mind. She can still help with the permission from the council. I'd prefer it to be you, I know you have just taken on your new job but it will be fun and you have got your 'head screwed on' so we can keep things straight forward and we can split all the profits evenly. I trust you over Lindsey. And it will be fun, we could easily do it."

"Not saying no. Have you considered Catwalk or Matt or Jimmy?" Jimmy had gone to his locker getting his huge array of shampoos and anti-chlorine shower gels. Reminiscent of some points in Ian Thorpe's life, Jimmy has arrived at the conclusion he is allergic to pool chlorine. Nobody has given Jimmy any sympathy for it.

"All of them would do a good job but Catwalk's head is both in her running and getting into college. Matt is too sensible, he's got a

great business head and we will be asking him for lots of advice but I need another dreamer as a sidekick. I do sometimes doubt myself so need someone to bounce along with, when one is low the other's high will counteract the low. Jimmy is like a big brother. As a big brother to me, he will try to protect me from any disappointments and the best way to protect me would be convincing me not to get involved. Me and you would make the best team."

"Thanks, I think? Know it will take commitment. Not got a lot of time. Don't want to disappoint you Ives-Star. Let me consider it. Will then tell you what I've decided. For argument's sake, what are the first couple of jobs to do?"

"Well first, well, the most important is to not let our swimming suffer and your new job and your relationship with Steve. It is not going to be hours and hours of work. We won't be getting involved in the nitty-gritty they have experts for that. Erm, the first, the second thing will be... No actually it is not like I need you to do jobs. I'm not being lazy. I think I'm capable of at least attempting all the jobs. What I need, if you don't mind, is for you to take charge and tell me what jobs to do and keep me from getting bogged down by me being too pedantic with projects please."

"Sounding complicated Ives."

"It is really simple. All I need to do is get the green light from a production company, and erm, once I have that – is to get permission from a pool to host it, preferably our pool."

"Well okay. Advising when I can as a friend sounds better than being partners. I am always happy to help. In my role, the first thing to ask is, have you contacted any production companies?"

"This is exactly what I need! Thank you! No, I haven't because, because..."

"Why?"

"They are not making it easy. Lots say they don't accept unsolicited scripts."

"Okay. What's the plan?"

"I'm still looking, but I have found a website that lets people with ideas upload the concepts for production companies to read at their leisure. You choose whether you want to post ideas just for a month or you can have a years access. Downside that is you have to pay."

"How much?"

"Don't know sorry. Not cheap." Jimmy is back and listening-in. He is unaware of the whole story but feels compelled to speak,

"Typical that is Ives. Our society only rich people have the tin to be heard. Only their ideas count. If our country was not ravished by greed, we'd be the sound country swinging the world around by its bollocks, making it a sounder place. Instead, you know all these Lifeguards here, none of them have any contracts. Like most people; they are all on minimum wage and every week fighting to get enough hours from their, a Council, employer. Whatever the reason over seven million fluoride-coshed people in this country are working for for less than ten grand a year. It knocks me sick. But the rich are getting scott-free richer. It is a loophole to the minimum wage that states people should be getting thirteen grand—" To be polite Ives has been fomenting Jimmy by hawking 'yes' in his pauses.

"Ahem. Quit your poli-titing." Sue looks at Ives, "Ives is this type of behaviour you wanted me to prevent. Stop you from getting side-tracked on a tirade over life. Stay focussed?" Ives laughs happy that the team-work that has helped them succeed in swimming is now filtering down to other aspects of their life.

"Haha, yes please Sue."

"Tonight we will both have a look on the internet for some of your production companies. Tomorrow we will see who has the best. The only rule is, every competition has rules, you are limited to spending half an hour, no more, looking. We both have to be up early for training."

"Look! Goose pimples. Not from the cold showers but how good this team is going to be. You and me, our joint power. Make the world a nice place so Jimmy can sleep at night."

"We'll see. Direct that energy into the show or swimming. Focus. Direct your energy. Thirty star-jumps on your run home."

"Can I at least tirade about these polar-pissing-bear showers?"

Jimmy jests and Sue ignores. Ives is still getting familiarized to the adult phenomenon of hugging. He has hugged Sue before, but he has never picked her up and spun her around. Not wanting to leave Jimmy out he gives him a high handshake. After getting dressed Ives leaves Coach and runs off home, he surpassed Sue's comment-challenge, star-jumping sixty times, not a remarkable amount but indicative of Ives liking set targetable challenges.

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Practising for the Real World

Two days afterwards.

Sue had seen Ives this morning but the dawning day had drunk up any excess enthusiastic energy. Sue had used the day's opportunity to text an idea into motion. Now, whilst waiting to get into the pool for their evening training, Sue is softly speaking,

"Ives listen. You gave Jimmy that swim cap? You also gave him those bike-pedals. You gave Matt those unopened goggles? You ordered stuff for me from t'internet and not charged me the full amount. We have all had birthday presents from each other and from you. Nobody has ever gotten you a birthday present because somehow you've kept everyone from knowing your birthday. You have done all this when you haven't had two pennies to rub together. Well, all us three have all chipped-in and paid for you to post the show for two months on the website you mentioned. Matt will give you a type of cheque. I've never had a cheque before. Have you?" This was a new human feeling for Ives, he was both at the same time humbled and proud. A bit of pride was initially at the mention he has managed to keep his birthday under wraps. As Sue's supporting words continued Ives's pride was avalanched by the sheer reverence he felt for his friends. They had put on him a coat of many feelings. Ives wanted to keep wearing this dreamlike coat as long as possible; the feelings on the coat closest to his heart was love for his friends, closest to his head was the enlivenment by the investing-friends believing in him and determinism not to let his friends down. Both feelings he knew that will help him give his project his very best. Ives thanks the others as best as he can articulate when they had congregated. He gets cut short. Matt is zealously looking towards the pool. Quickly turning to see what he is seeing; at the far end of the pool at the shallow end, a large wavering woman in her black costume and late forties is unsteadily descending the ladder into the pool. Swimming in the pool is regular and dainty man called Joe; in his early sixties with poor technique he frontcrawls his mile every day quailing from the kids in the public-part by hugging the wall. Joe is presently one metre from the ladder. The lady feeling she has achieved enough drop releases her clench on the ladder, in a semi-

seated position she cascades downwards and slightly backwards onto Joe. The weight is great enough to force him down whilst still horizontal. The woman attempts to look under her girth to see what is down there. Two seconds later Joe pops-up with a face like a caught salmon to the crescendo of ninety percent of the Coynus Cads's laughter.

Sue assigned Ives his next task which she will collect tomorrow morning. He is to draw up a segment by segment plan of the gameshow schedule. Each separate game has to be explained. As they were not delayed by chatting unlike last night Ives was allotted forty minutes to get it all down on paper at home. Hearing Katherine's running club is not on, with discernment, Sue had asked Katherine, Jimmy and Matt if they could get to tomorrow's evening practice half an hour early. Thursday night's training is an hour later than the other nights so everyone except Matt said they will be able make it earlier. Instead of Matt playing at being under-twelve, Sue thought to bring her younger ex-swim-club sister, Daisy. The plan is for them to act out the games, which will be fun but also research for when a production company asks them to pitch the idea. They will have confidence the games work and fit in to Ives's estimate of a forty-five minute show duration.

The swimming area is laid out with the unisex single changing cubicles the first feature once passed the worktop with mirrors and hair-dryers on your right. To the right, after the mirrors, back-to-back lockers separate two rows of two back-to-back changing cubicles in the same eggshell-blue effect. The third which is the last row of cubicles furthest from the entrance again is separated by the second row of back-to-back lockers. Down to the right, there are open shower blocks at the end of the cubicle rows. The block nearest to the entrance side is the one that is broken and cold. The middle shower block are the unpredictable ones. The ones furthest from the door are the most reliable showers. Onwards from the showers is the fifteen metre wide shallow end. Halfway along the pool on either side is Lifeguard's high chair. Still heading to the deep-end looking to the right through the tall windows is the foyer, where afterwards Coach habitually drinks his coffee. From halfway down the pool, the deep-end floor is moveable. From one point eight-metres to

zero. At this, far end of the pool, is where the clubs set their start. There are attachments for the starting blocks on the beige tiled floors, a white-board, right of centre, for writing instructions and two clocks. A regular clock and a large minute clock. There are no numbers on the minute clock. They are designed with markings every twelfth. The hand takes one minute to complete a rotation. The dial forms a diameter as opposed to a radius, split with one end being red and the other a contrasting colour. It is of no real consequence to the swimmers but inexplicably sometimes it begins to run backwards, anti-clockwise.

The five gather for the undressed-rehearsal organised by Sue. Standing at the far left of the twenty-five metre pool the currently quietest position. Alston, one of the rival swim clubs has three lanes at the opposite side of the pool. Ives is not concerned with Alston being privy to their game: the club will have no idea what was going on, nor the Lifeguard. However Ives was glad Lindsey was not around this time on Thursday evenings. Ives had told Sue he was regretting telling Lindsey so soon. This is the one time he would prefer Lindsey to have a low opinion of him so their discussion resembling a cloud will float around her head before evaporating leaving no trace or memory. He formulates she is not going to forget if he keeps reminding her.

"Thank you all for coming to play the first ever, 'Scream if You Want to Swim Faster'."

"I like that name Ives. It is better than your others: it's like something you could put on a swim cap. A black swim cap with the writing in red. Dripping like blood. It is too long though. Keep up the progress." Ives alternates from his pretend commentators voice to quietly answer Katherine's comment,

"I was also thinking of 'Chump the Champ' or even 'Water Stars'."

"No." Katherine says with disgust. Ives flips back to his commentator's voice,

"Chump the Water Stars!"

"NO!" Everyone cries.

"Oh, by the way, this will all be done by a comedian. Someone really funny." Everybody had a synchronous mind-wander imagining their favourite stand-up comedian could be talking to them. "Let's meet our

first team, COYNUS CADS." Ives steps closer. "If you don't mind me saying, that is a naff club-name. Hmnn. Let's meet the team." Ives looks over at Jimmy and puts an imaginary microphone his way, "Hello. My name is Jimmy and my specialism is five-thousand metres." Ives smiles. He liked the way of introducing themselves the manner Jimmy did, better than saying their age or what they do, or want to do for a job.

"Hi my name is Sue. My specialist is fifteen-hundred. AND the eight-hundred."

"I'm Katherine. I'm hundred-metre fly."

"And who is the under-twelve swimmer in the team?"

"I'm Daisy. My specialism is swimming one length to impress any boys watching."

"You know these are mainly sprinting events... and your club has sent two long-disappointment, I MEAN long-distance sorry, long-distance swimmers and someone who's new speciality is one length of no-mascara-drama-crawl. Tremendous. I hope the next team we are about to meet have not scraped the bottom of the pool for their contestants." Ives was hoping to be funny. It's definitely the way jokes are told. He was somewhere in the middle ground. "Right, at this point we would meet the other imaginary-contestants."

Everybody except Ives is giggling.

"To our first event. In the first modern Olympics in Athens 1896, Alfred Hajas won by swimming the one-hundred metre freestyle in one minute twenty-two point two seconds. One person from each team will swim one-hundred metres. For every second faster than this 'one twenty-two point two' will be added to your score. At the end the fastest team will use their total as a head start racing against our special guest star swimmer, oooh." Ives looks to establish they have understood. "Who have you nominated to swim this hundred-metres freestyle event?" Jimmy, Sue, Katherine and Daisy quickly see if any of them have answers. Not being sure Sue asks,

"Why what will happen in other events? Ha ha, you know actually – bit nervous?"

"I once got nervous when I was going to race somebody's greyhound in the park." Nobody else heard Katherine's comment except Sue who laughs. More so at the randomness of the anecdote. Ives speaks up, "Don't worry. I'll explain the rules as we go along. So now it can be anyone."

Out of those four Sue is normally about a second faster than Jimmy swimming one-hundred metres. For freestyle swimming, one minute twenty-two point two is a very attainable time to surpass. Back in Glasgow 2014 the winning time was 48.11 seconds. Sue will be aiming for between fifty-six seconds and one minute. After all she is a longer distance swimmer.

They all line up at the far end of the pool. Ives has a stopwatch. Sue readies herself, lifts down her goggles and pulls the customary putting-on-goggles-face. As Alston Swim Club had one half of the pool the six members of the public were happily dawdling up and down at their own pace in their own place. As most were swimming with their head above water on the front section of their swim they would look over to the corner curious to what was unusually going on. When Sue, with the rest on tow patting her on her back, lined up and took her marks at the end of the pool near to the side the five of them noticed the public shift to the left. The Lifeguard wearing yellow and blue in his chair respectfully looked on with both professionalism and puzzlement. For Ives all this felt good. He has never been cool, but at the pool this was his and theirs. When walking down the street nobody moves out of his way. Here they feel they are the prince and princesses of the universe. The Lifeguards respected them, for many the only people who do, the public in a good way envied them, Ives could wear loudly-bright coloured swim shorts and only because he was in a team that could tear up and down the pool people think him and the others are the bee's knees. Ives walks down the side of the pool looking at his stopwatch with Sue in the background.

"Take your marks! BEEEEEP!" Sue gets a good start. The public dawdlers lull their own swimming to watch. As Sue approaches the thirty second mark and the end where she started,

"GO. GO! GO! GO!" The four shout as Sue's soundtrack for her swim "She's doing well. Twenty-eight at the turn." Ives using the stopwatch. Sue finished the hundred-metres at 58 seconds. A decent time considering there was not a starting block for her to spring from. As the others were congratulating her Ives done the easy maths,

"Call it 24 and a half seconds above the target. Well-done Sue-Per." Ives wrote the score down.

"From now on, for the remaining four events you can only use one person once. So think about who you are using. The events will follow I.M. order, all of them will be one-hundred metres but they will all have a twist. A fun twist. So who do you nominate for the hundred metre fly?" They didn't even discuss. They nominate Katherine. This is Katherine's event. "The twist." Ives exclaims. He is looked at less than hopefully. "There will be four questions. Each question gotten wrong is an extra metre from the flags that must be swum underwater." Relieved they all nod to show they think it is not only a good idea but surprisingly sensible. What the swimming flags are for is to provide a point of reference for backstrokers that they are nearing the wall. The flags are put five-metres from the end. When they were younger, swimming frontcrawl and butterfly, Coach Mint for efficiency was always telling them not to breathe inside the flags. No matter how it appears, as some of the Lifeguards still think, the flags are not there as a camp decorative declaration that a swim-club is in the house. Going back to I.M. An I.M. stands for individual medley. A swimmer would swim a distance of butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and front crawl in that order.

"Question one. The general knowledge question. Can anyone tell me what country the Dali Lama resides in?" Jimmy clicks his fingers whilst he tries to recall the answer to show the others not to fret, that it is in his brain somewhere.

"Tibet!"

"Correct Jimmy! Question two. The swimming question. Who is the current fifty-free record holder?"

Non of them know. Daisy, Sue's twelve year old sister, suggests,

"I think it's that Brazilian man."

"Clever. How'd you know that?" Sue, surprised at her Sister.

"I just know. Cannot think of his name, argh." They look at Ives hoping for the points.

"Well-done Daisy, can you guess his name though?" Ives did not want them to get all the questions correct as he wanted to test the underwater swimming part.

"Kwsuary Tasrfyidyio." Daisy joked.

"Ha ha, that's actually close enough. Well-done you. It's, Cesar Ceilo." Ives tells Sue. "I've got to make the next questions harder

though. Question three. In biology what is the oxygen carrying equivalent of haemoglobin in muscles called?" A beatnik silence.

"No? You can't get them all right. It is Myoglobin. Question four maths. If someone has swum four-hundred metres in four-minutes what is their twenty-five metre length time? Ten seconds to answer."

"Too hard!" Daisy sounding like she was talking to her teacher.

"It's thirty seconds lad." Jimmy impressing everyone with his quick answer, except for Ives,

"Oooh sort of close. But nope. It is fifteen seconds. Because it is sixteen in four minutes so four lengths in a minute, fifteen seconds in each."

"Devastated. Sorry team. Devastated. Even my Granddad Einstein sometimes errored – I worked it out as a fifty metre pool."

"Yeah, yeah!" Sue sceptically says. Changing her tone, "Very good to work it out, but when do you swim in fifty-metres?"

"Erm. Sorry. Stop. Did I say 'twenty-five metre', I meant to?" Jimmy admits,

"You did lad."

"I am glad you got two wrong so we can practise the underwater part. Catwalk, I'll stand with a noodle at seven-metres and Daisy, please, at the far seven metres. Between the noodle and the end you cannot be above water." A noodle is a three-foot long, flexible cylindrical float non-swimmers and children use. They come in a variety of colours. Jimmy had picked up two purple ones. "Again you are going for below one minute twenty-two point two." Swimming underwater can technically be the fastest way of moving. That is one reason why FINA set the rule of the swimmer's head must break the surface before fifteen metres. Freestyle fifty-metre sprinters generally surface before fifteen metres so it is not totally clear cut, especially when lack of oxygen is a factor. However the more comfortable a swimmer can use their underwater speed the better all-round swimmer they are. There are still a lot of clubs neglecting this what is called the fifth-stroke.

Katherine lines up where Sue stood minutes before. Katherine is the youngest of the older group of swimmers. Aside from the hundred metre butterfly, in her category, she wins many individual medley events. Katherine has not developed her stroke to a great extent. She has chosen to spend all the time in the water building her strength and endurance. Her stroke looks choppy and rough, however

there have been many gold medallists over the past fifty years with worse. The proof has been in the pudding for Katherine, in competitions she has reduced many of her competitors to jelly. Her face is delicately female, with small features, melodic sapphire eyes and a warm smile that everybody takes joy in. Katherine is unusually short for a swimmer. Lacking reasonable height and a distance runner's sylph like legs, Katherine is possibly not physically ideally built for many sports (except for cycling where she resembles ninety percent of the professional female cyclists). What makes her excel and successful is her fantastic attitude. Many champion swimmers have noted that between the best in the world, all physically similar, what separates the champions is their attitude to training. Katherine has the mental fortitude to give racing and training her all. If some of the more physically adept swimmers in the club had her attitude they would have already set world records in the Olympics and Worlds. Conversely if all the swimmers had Katherine's attitude they possibly could spend more time boxing in the pool than swimming. Katherine suffers from OCD. One day she struggled to get her goggles and cap in order, and so started the warm-up set one whole minute late. Inconsolably she replaced the pool water with tears. Another time, for the first time in his life, Coach bungled explaining the sets. He immediately noticed and corrected himself. The mistake meant swimming an extra sixty lengths to the additional swimming that evening. Katherine had to stick to what the Coach first said. It meant messing up the carefully crafted training plan. Although she received admiration from the swimmers, she hated herself for having to, but had no choice. In the end, her friends joined in to support their cherished friend, Katherine. The other swimmers sometimes banter they too suffer from Katherine's OCD. Everyone though is really fond of Katherine and says she has a sweet heart, just a bad head. When Katherine first came to Coynus Cads she was in a fortnight-long coerced phase of trying Olympic or race walking. To differentiate her from another Catherine she was called, 'Katherine the Walker'. Hating the race-walking she soon stopped. The name stuck and quickly shortened to Catwalk. No-one can recall who came up with it but the name suits her.

Katherine has not realised how truly familylike her swimming friends are of her former actions, such as when she would sob if a swimmer lapped her, generally making the rest feel bad for swimming fast.

The main reason for their tolerance is, parallel to most of the population, they all have their own OCD to different extents, and feel like crying when overtaken. Matt and Jimmy least so, although extremely pedantic about their training. Ives gets OCD, he recently is having to use the same locker, cubicle and shower. The latest example is computers. An Auntie asked him to do a ten minute job, he had the laptop for five days pulling both an all-nighter and the software to bits in self loathing cancelling his bank holiday plans. Katherine's seems to getting better, Ives's worse.

"Take your marks! BEEEP!" Most other sports get an imposing pistol. Swimmers have the odium of starting to the sound of a collapsing computer. The type of beep you would hear walking into a shop. Katherine achieves a good start. She comes up at about the twelve metre mark. Hammers five strokes in before coming to Daisy's purple noodle. With a slight loss of momentum she pulls herself below the surface arms by her side, dolphining. She transacts a graceful submerged turn. Pushing off the wall. Katherine must have felt her soles brushing the noodle as she surfaced.

"That is so good training." Katherine pants hanging on the wall at her finish. "That last seven! I did not know if I had enough air in me. How did I do?"

"One nineteen! That is really good, going underwater and turning underwater seems a momentum killer. You done fab darling."

"Thanks." Katherine always seems disappointed in her excellent times, as if she is wanting to set a new world record each and every swim. Her water smudged eye-shadow also gives the wrong impression of recent tears. Katherine is not a girl who hides behind make-up. She wears very little to none, but has a penchant for eyeliner. Katherine, singing off the same song sheet as all the female swimmers there, has kept her natural hair colour. Katherine's is a small shade of brown from being jet black. "Tell you what, this game is really good. I'd watch it." The others then compliment her performance.

The next question round is in the same format, one general knowledge question, one swimming, one biology and one maths question. They got two correct again.

"Every team starts off with five floats and five pull buoys. For every question wrong you would get an extra five of each. You got

two wrong. Jimmy could you get us please fifteen floats and fifteen pull buoys please."

"Fifteen?"

"I'm just going to ask Paul about a lane. Can you get all the same colour please."

"Fucking fussy much?" With his back to Jimmy Ives smirks. Paul is the Lifeguard on duty. One of the best Lifeguards in the leisure centre. He has a big family and treats the centre and the people inside as he would his home and family. He works above and beyond what is expected getting the place and the water crystal clean and clear. "Paul, because the pool is emptier now, just this one time only are we allowed to put our extra lane out early please? It is only ten, fifteen minutes early?"

"Yes, I was going to get the lane out ready in five minutes anyway. Are you okay doing it or do you want help?"

"No I'm, I'm, we're good thank you Paul. We are practising a competition to go on the telly. Jimmy is getting our floats out is that okay too? We will put them straight back after two minutes. Promise."

"I know you will Ives." Ives really respects Paul and always makes sure to say thank you to him on his way out.

"What do you want doing with all these floats lad?" Ives is asked by Jimmy as he approaches him, wading through the water with the lane rope in tow. Ives answers with a question,

"Oh it is backstroke now, who is doing this hundred?"

"Me." Daisy animatedly notifies Ives.

"Whilst I tighten this, Jimmy, can you, maybe spread all these out in the lane please. Spread them all around it please." Jimmy felt good throwing fifteen floats and pull buoys into the water. A pull buoy is a peanut-shell shape float about thirty centimetres long that a swimmer puts between their legs to train both their kick and arms. Normally the pull buoys are striped blue and white. Remarkably Jimmy listened to Ives and dug out of the cupboard all the matching peachy-red and yellow ones. The lane looks bizarre full of the floats that Daisy had helped to scatter. Some were probably bound to sneak over into Alston's lane. Alston's swim coaches are consistently the same, very young seeming, people. Ives religiously says a flirty hello to the female Coach called Rachel, although he has no idea how old she is. Anything from sixteen to twenty-six. He coyly accosts her,

"Sorry if any floats stray into your lane, it is only a one minute swim then we'll get them all out. Sorry again." Rachel is impressed and intrigued to what they are doing. She figures it is some cutting-edge training drill seen on the internet. She would love to ask but has kids to coach.

"I'm going to have to swim through all them? Imposs!" Daisy, her body buzzing, asks, points and laughs.

"Sorry there is no starting block." Daisy does not mind, raring to start.

Daisy is eleven, nearly twelve with ebony black hair. She started swimming at a young age with her older sister Sue. The last year or so she has stopped coming. Sue's theory to why Daisy has stopped swimming for the time-being in all probability is overload. From a very young age Daisy has swum more than most. Many of her school friends were in a local swim club so she swam in that but also wanted to swim in the higher standard Coynus Cads. Now, occasionally Daisy will come to the pool with her sister but swim and play in the public part. Coach is always delighted to see her, hopeful she will start training again one day. Sometimes she helps with his timing or counting people's distance per stroke. Daisy, according to Sue, is really into fashion designing. She has two gifts. The first is realising her passion at such a young age, a passion she can develop enjoy and eventually make a living out of it. The second is her actual designing talent. She has already won a fashion magazine's competition at such a young age. Sue and Daisy get on with each other very well, either despite or because of the age difference.

"BEEEEEP" Daisy pushes off gracefully. It is a pity she is still not training. The floats disturb her arm entry. Having to push down through them did slow her down. They did not interrupt her fun. Ives furtively knocked twenty seconds off her time as Katherine is eagerly wanting the team to do well. He did this as he feared Katherine may pull a face at Daisy's tremendous effort if the time was slow. "One thirty two! Well-done you. It did not look easy." Daisy humbly smiles. Sue and Daisy quietly talk to each other whilst Ives announces, "Going into the breaststroke you are seventeen seconds ahead." Ives and Jimmy are in the water passing the floats to Daisy and Sue putting them in the crates, neatly.

They got all the next set of questions correct. Mainly due to Jimmy. "I am not too certain about this event but the questions were to determine how many strokes you are allowed per length. You can use eight, not including the usual underwater kicks and pull." Ives cannot forecast if that is too many for a twenty-five metre lane. Eight is not extremely low, especially if the swimmer gets a good push off and glide.

Jimmy is swimming this event. He is a decent breaststroker. He uses breaststroke to warm down after his front crawl training. Jimmy is an ultra-long distance swimmer. His stroke is short. He does not reach far enough in front and finishes his underwater stroke short. He gives the impression he is grappling every metre. His legs do not help him much. When elevating his speed to an unnatural tempo his legs splay out here, there and everywhere. However for Jimmy's events, five and ten kilometres his technique suits him perfectly. Most distance swimmers only use their kicking for balance and position in the water. Swimming front crawl he can swim for hours and often, outdoors, he does. He is the oldest in the group. He wears a grey swim cap that makes him look really old from afar unless he is wearing his ultra comfortable large black goggles, then he looks like a stereotypical alien. Stripped from his swimming gear, Jimmy has hair his brother cuts with electric clippers, normally he goes for a 'number two'. He has let it grow longer than normal. Matt and Jimmy are both six-foot three, due to his more angular bone structure Jimmy looks smaller. Deep set eyes compressed into an archetypal Viking face, cloak his intelligence. With his longer than normal hair, Sue once accused Jimmy of being the young spitting-image of B.J. Thomas after she seen a video of him on Youtube singing 'Rain Drops Keep Falling On My Head.'

[<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PPGA4-8oSUI>]. Jimmy still has some training to go before he is winning internationally but he will make it. A keen mountain biker, he is a better swimmer than he is a cyclist. Mirroring his swimming he could cycle all day. His father is a plasterer but not rough; a polite and quiet man. From a young age Jimmy would do jobs with his father, getting plenty of extra income. To the disappointment of his teachers Jimmy did not stay at school. If anything Jimmy would have chosen to study abroad. Instead he opted to get his guilds in plastering. Accordingly Jimmy has been making some money doing extra work to top-up the low paid apprenticeship. When he is working in dusty sites he routinely wears

his dust mask when no-one else on the site would even entertain the idea. Jimmy is endlessly 'off and on' with his long time sweetheart who he has been dating since thirteen. They have known each other since they were three. None of the swimmers have ever met her, only Coach, instead they all humorously refer to her as Jimmy-Wife. From Jimmy's description she seems nice.

Jimmy swam his challenge in a genuine one minute thirty-one point zero seven. After Daisy's swim, Ives detected Jimmy's cogs working to suspect that Ives altered Daisy's time, which he probably would have done himself.

"Six seconds ahead." Katherine was really getting into the game. They had five minutes before their swim club started. So they all rushed the questions which they got one correct.

"Three wrong so you have to wear an additional three items of drag clothing." It has been said that you know you are a swimmer if told 'to wear your drag outfit' you show up at the pool with baggy shorts and t-shirts and not high heels and fishnet tights. Wearing baggy clothing causes drag in the water necessitating the swimmer to use more muscle power to pull themselves through the water. A lot of Olympic swimmers train by towing small parachutes, busy pools and lack of resources prevent this. Wearing baggy clothes is simpler. Ives pulls out clothes from his bag. His red shorts and white polo-neck T-shirt that he uses for his own drag outfit. A sewn-on Baywatch badge adorns them both. Ives informs a bemused Sue, "If you got them all correct you would only have to wear shorts and t-shirt, there you go. But for your three wrong, working top to bottom, here is a red woolly alpine hat with tassels, acrylic not wool so pool safe – possibly, a baggy yet stylish red cardigan and snowy longjohns. If you would have got four wrong you would have had to wear these seductive scarlet socks."

Sue is a bit younger than Jimmy but still older than Ives and Katherine. She is ginger with complementary light skin. She is most proud of her full lips. Her teal eyes beam a penetrating complexion. She has to remind the male swimmers that she is tall. Comparable to Matt, Sue has swam uninterrupted since birth, she looks at home in the water. Her stroke is unforced and efficient. A very talented and experience open-water swimmer Coach sometimes has to remind her of

her only fault whilst swimming in the pool: lifting her head up for a look around. She has swam in most of the national lake swims. According to the event organisers Sue is ranked fourth in the UK, but often comes first and second. The best thing is that over the last six months Sue has really improved. This next soon-coming season Sue is definitely going to impress the fishes how good us apes swim. Sue has recently finished the college-section of her childcare qualifications and has started working as a nursery-nurse. Once qualified she is planning on applying for nannying positions. It is a type of training scheme she is doing. It pays slightly more than apprenticeship schemes and she tops up her income working the odd Saturday night baby sitting. She has already gotten herself a car which she mystifyingly describes as a 'freestyle and listen to trance' gold convertible car. Her and her Daisy suit it.

Sue swam this one-hundred metres freestyle in one minute twenty-three point eight, The clothing slowing her down a lot.

"So now in the show if you had more seconds than the rival team you would go through to the final. Your time is a head start. You will be racing against a special guest star swimmer! Different one each week. You will be in the same lane as them so if at any point they touch your feet, your team has lost. You will be doing a team medley the guest an I.M." One difference between an I.M. and a team medley is the order the events are swum. In a team medley one swimmer would swim their distance of backstroke. As soon as they touch the wall the next swimmer would dive right over them and swim breaststroke, when they got back to the wall the next swimmer would dive over them to swim butterfly and then the next to swim freestyle. The order needs to be different from an individual medley because backstroke, which starts with the swimmer in the water, has to be first to stop the teams getting in each others way.

"Whoop whoop! Is there someone famous coming in?" Sue taunts Ives.

"Is it Michael Phelps or Ryan Lochte?"

"No, I'm sure I seen Mark Foster's green car in the car park."

Katherine joins in.

"Rebecca Addlington?" Even Daisy was participating. "No wait, that Brazilian Cesar chap."

"One day it will be all of them. And they will give out swimming tips after the adverts. But today it is no-one. We will just have to

imagine."

"Well why can't it be you?" Sue asks.

"You are our team's Sun Yang except lankier." Jimmy, sort of, praises Ives. Ives is reluctant. He suspects that with six seconds head start he would not catch them over a hundred metres. He'll be tiring when fresh swimmers are diving in.

"Go on." Katherine pleads.

"Okay thanks. You have actually got just under six seconds head start." Ives is the tallest of the club, six-foot seven. Once a member of the public said he swims like a sloth. Being an fan of the sloth in Ice Age films she was trying pay him a compliment. His long orang-utan like arms slowly reaching forward out above the water's surface are a sight to behold. Being inspired by many swimmers, such as Sun Yang, Ives has a technically excellent slow gaping stroke, misleading a lay observer into thinking he is not trying. When in actuality with precisely applied effort he fleets through the water. Two of the puddled Lifeguards argue if his face is more that of an eagle or an owl. Ives's hair is of medium to short length, light brown and styled in the current eclectic style: not too neat, nor too messy. Not too spiky nor too flat. His hair, loveable bright smile and odd speech enables him to get away with his cheeky impishness. No one has asked Ives about his speech. Even his closest friends need to concentrate when listening to him. Combined with his indistinct tone Ives struggles with pronouncing the letter R. Aside from the costs, realising he is even harder to understand on phones is the main reason Ives tries to elude them, especially mobiles.

"What is our order." Daisy has decided she does not want to swim the lead backstroke against an observable bearing down butterflyer. "Can I do butterfly?"

"Yeah of course. Don't forget, it is only a game, it is fun, but if you are worried Ives will catch you, you're best going for breaststroke, Ives's worst is backstroke. You're a very good swimmer so do not worry." Sue thinking to help her as a big sister would.

"I'll go for fly, as that is later." Daisy says heedless. They all begin to feel a bit rushed now as their club are appearing.

"Who's starting us. Don't forget I'm six seconds after."

"I will." Daisy was enjoying this. Jimmy was leading them off in backstroke. Jimmy and Katherine went to speak at the same time. Jimmy lets Katherine go first,

"Who needs a social-life when we've got swimming." Wishing the

statement was true, curtailed their laughter. Jimmy's turn, "Good luck and good game kids, good game." Jimmy grinned to Ives, patting him on his back. Before any of them were properly prepared, "Take your marks, GO." Daisy shouted. Sue all-but inadvertently knocks Katherine into the pool, turning around to skip to the shallow-end to be ready to start her breaststroke leg before Jimmy arrives. The race was closer than Ives expected. They all done themselves proud. The team won the imaginary prizes. If they took themselves to be an average team and if Ives had not knocked off Daisy's twenty seconds they would have had no head-start from the star-swimmer. Jimmy had obviously not realised so Ives decides not to mention to anyone in the future he will assign each team twenty seconds to begin with. Ives was happy how it all went. Grateful to his friends for playing, proud of their talented swimming and relieved that his team thought the idea was worth trying, bringing him out of his thoughts Ives heard Jimmy telling him, "That went really smooth like. I'm vomiting rainbows here how good it was."

"Thanks. Honestly all the timing was due to luck that it worked out. Total luck. Although it could all be tweaked if needed; could give the team twenty seconds to begin with." Ives realising he is rabbiting mumbled the last part. Due to the passion in his voice he restores their attention saying, "But thank you so much for helping. Thank you all."

"You've topped a belter there." As the swimmers are getting in the water ready for their hour practice, Ives shifts to the toilets to have his ritual pre-Coyuns-Cads poo. He quickly diverts himself to his locker to note down the 'twenty-second' idea. He gets into the water four lengths of front crawl behind.

That night, whilst virtually vertically asleep Ives popped into Asda buying some thank-you cards to give to everyone who contributed to upload the proposal on the website and played the game earlier.

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Stormy Butterflies

Sue had asked Ives to get into morning practice fifteen minutes early. The only downside to that is the pool does not open until six. Arriving at the entrance the same time as Lifeguard Lee, him and the other caring Lifeguards thankfully let them shiver and shake off the rain by standing inside the foyer until the place officially opens. Ives looks two-sheets to the wind so Sue speaks for them both,

"Good morning Lee. Thanks for letting us in. Cold isn't the word. You are on time hun!"

"Yeah, our house is packed and I need a dump."

Ives is aware his face is showing sleepy. He attempts to alter it to appreciative, as he is for Sue's assistance. "Ives we are up to the point where we need to discuss what to do next. We've heard nothing and it has been nearly two weeks." Ives likes the way Sue said 'We've' as opposed to 'you'. Ives nods. He'd point out two weeks is not long if he was more awake and not mellowly swept-up in Sue's flow. Sue continues, "All of us who took part says it is a really good idea. We all enjoyed it and can see your goal that it will encourage people to swim. The situation is: we have got the debate of three choices, tell me what you think. By the way, don't be worrying, you have done very-well and hope you know we are all happy to help. Choice one maybe to carry on with this website we have been on. Choice two is to hassle the production companies directly. Idea number three..." Ives can tell whatever Sue is about to say next is her favourite option, "Think you have mentioned the idea in the past – Do not involve any television companies. Host it ourselves. It will still encourage people to swim."

"Thank you Sue. Idea number one: I agree, that we could be waiting forever. Idea number two: I think the downside to that is, most submissions will just go straight into the bin unread. If one of the annoyed sleazy people read it, odds are one will probably rob the idea if they like it." Aware he is being negative but too tired to stop, "First we will hear of it is an advert for a new show. The show will have the vague outline of ours but they would have murdered the concept and called it something stupid." With candidly

eager enthusiasm, Ives is happy to say, "I concur with you. Host it ourselves. If that is your choice? We could even film it ourselves and post it every week on a website? Maybe? Then when word gets around the TV people may show it."

"Is that the plan?"

"Yes. Plan A, for amazing. If you agree. Sue, thanks."

"I do. Have you heard anything from Lindsey? I know you mentioned it to her?"

"Nope, with it being me, anything I say will go in one ear and out the other." The lights go on over the pool. Sue un-slouches. Ives stands and hugs her, careful the hands on his gangly arms do not wrap too far around. Standing back making eye contact as serious as he can muster Ives says, "Thanks Sue."

"Are you wanting another to-do list?"

"Please."

"I'll sort it out. Not been first in the pool for ages."

"Race you." Sue wasn't racing but Sue won. Before issuing the challenge, Ives forgot he needed a poo before he got in, he wasn't even second in.

Sue and Ives enjoyed their training. Under Coach's orders the shortened warm-up and warm-down was the only time they were not swimming butterfly. The only respite for their shoulder muscles, halfway through, was swimming butterfly-kick half with and without holding a kick-board. Coach said it will be a shock to their systems. He was correct. Jimmy did not have as good of a morning as Sue and Ives. He went to get the kick-boards for everyone to do the twenty-four lengths of butterfly-kick. The well lit store cupboard is at the far end of the pool where they are based, to the right if walking towards the deep-end. Coach makes sure to keep the three-metre by four-metre room neat and tidy when he uses it. One downside to the room is it is cold going in when wet. The room holds a variety of floats for the whole range of activities the pool hosts. Bridgert (the pool's accredited swim club) three years ago got a grant for some new swim-specific training aids, such as pull-buoys, kick-boards and flags. The approximately twenty-five peachy-red and yellow, and twenty-five blue and white floats are not in bad condition, some have had rather large bites taken out of them by mixed up children. Entering the room, fright nearly squeeze faeces out of Jimmy. Someone else was in the room with him. Shocked Jimmy

sermons all the expletives he knows. The automatic-light fluttering on to reveal Lee the Lifeguard. In the place the boss would never think to look, Lee had deftly meccano'd a standard sized bed from the floats. He had even constructed a raised edge to act as a pillow. Recovered, he asks equally startled Lee for some floats. "But it is my float-bed. Can't you all share two of these four-foot round ones instead." Lee laughed at Jimmy's twisted chin and raised eyebrows. Lee passed Jimmy the minimum number of eighteen that he needed. "These blue and white ones aren't as comfy."

"Sorry Lee lad but I've got at least one if not two OCDers: it needs to be the peach ones like." For his bed Lee is forced to root out three five-by-four foot rectangle floats, stacked on their edge behind the huge round floats. They are heavy as they are happen to be thick enough to keep four sitting adults afloat. Jimmy balances his stack on his right palm whilst he shuts the door behind, leaving Lee to go back to sleep. It went without saying for Jimmy not to tell Coach or anyone who will lead to the managers finding out. The room is the cusp of being far enough from the pool that no-one would have heard.

Jimmy had not even been back in the water ten minutes when he hears Katherine swearing. He turns around to see she is swearing at him. After her kindred list of expletives, that happened to be only a couple less than Jimmy's earlier list,

"You are splashing too much. When you pass I cannot breath properly. I am coughing because of you."

"Sorry Katherine." Sue and Ives were not sure if it was fear or his heart-of-gold that kept Jimmy from justifiably defending himself from Katherine's unwarranted criticism: splashing whilst kicking butterfly with a kick-board is to be expected as it alters how much the back can flex.

Sue organised a meet-up with Matt and Ives where she would pass on the to-do list. The only hiccup was they had to wait a fortnight for Matt as he is on holiday in Tunisia. Sue said they needed Matt. This got Ives thinking. It was not long until he decided to keep a journal of who helped him and when. At first he would retro-actively fill it in. Ives's favourite notebook was selected for this task. It was an A4 ring-bound notebook that his Dad bought him as a Christmas gift. He was saving it for a special purpose and his gameshow fits

the bill. The external face is a rigid black card with cherry-red logo and ring-binds. The internal face was the same cherry-red. The thick paper inside with no 'show through' is smooth to write upon with Ives's fountain pen. He bedecked the book with threshold pictures of famous swimmers swimming. Ives did not want the journal to be exclusively about his own dreams. He compiled a list of ways he can help his friends to achieve their aspirations. With illustrative doodles in no particular order Matt was on top of the roll. To help Matt was to find him a girlfriend. To help Sue was to encourage her to swim an event in Bala. To help Jimmy was to get him to enter a triathlon, even though Ives is no fan of triathlons. To help Coach Mint, he was not sure, yet. To help Katherine, he thinks of an acclaimed book that he has read and the possibility it may help with her mind difficulties. He'll try to pluck up the courage and a sensitive way to lend it to her.

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Listing Friends

First in Ives's 'no particular order' list is Matt and a girlfriend. Immediately Ives thinks he has chosen the most difficult first. Being single, he cannot find anyone for himself, never mind Matt. He regrets his own boldness. He is going to give it a go. Sue seems excited about Ives's project.

Matt is officially swimming at County level, hoping to move up soon. He is of a similar age to Sue. Matt is a sprinter and with the build to match. He is good at all the strokes, swimming ever since he was a sperm and has never stopped. His Mum had him swimming as a new born, he probably swam laps in the womb. Matt is technically excellent. Trophies and medals in the fifty and hundred butterfly and frontcrawl decorate Matt's cupboard. He also often wins in breaststroke sprints. Matt is one of these people who love their own hair. He does his best to care for it. It does seem apparent that the girls he flirts with are taken with his hair. Plus Matt has a charm in the way he acts resembling a James Bond or saucy aristocrat. His articulate voice is the undercurrent that unwittingly draws them in. On the surface his friends see the best things about Matt is his humour. He has a really dry wit and is constantly peppering-up the other swimmers. With all these captivating qualities no-one can comprehend why he is still single. Ives's theory is Matt's last girlfriend is causing his current singledom. She hurt his heart. Approximately three months ago, one evening after swim practice, Matt lamented to everyone he was not jolly due to him priorly being castigated. Matt had noted how his previous positive vocabulary had changed needing to learn new words so he can depict to others what he was going through. Relatively speaking he had not been going out with this girl for that long. The last straw was discovering he was in the most trouble he had ever been in for the whole of his life. This mature and noble young man was in trouble for not thinking to get her tiny handbag dog a birthday card. His swim team should have all gotten trophies for squeezing in their force of laughter in order to sympathise. On the upside Matt has a very good job. He is about to finish an inductionship in a bank where he has been very successful impressing the bosses.

Exalting himself Ives thinks he may be able to set Matt up on an ostensible haphazard meeting with a girl he knows from his time a year ago weekly volunteering to take blind people out on tandem bikes. Her name is Fran, short for Francis. Not that it his business but Ives has deemed the name 'Fran' does not do her any justice. Fran has friends where Ives spent some years of his youth in Newcastle, they always had a lot to talk about. Maybe it is an age thing but Ives never found that spark between Fran and himself. Fran is the same age as Matt. She has dyed blonde her and often would crash the tandems with the poor but clement blind people on the back. Ives once tried to mend her bleeding knee with a cycle puncture repair patch and glue, she was not amused. Matt rarely cycles; luckily Fran occasionally swims. On the next Sunday morning. Ives cycled to meet his old friends to both say hello and to implement his plan. Talking to Fran it was not difficult to steer the conversation to swimming. Fran, not being a proper swimmer mentioned she would be grateful for some technique tips. Ives could get the two meeting through that.

Sunday night Ives is happy to hear from Matt on his phone after his fortnights holiday. In the longest text conversation he has had with Matt the very first thing swimmers seem to ask each other about holidays is, 'Did you get chance to swim much?' Then matters of food and the weather get mentioned. Matt was swimming every day in the Mediterranean and also in the hotel pool. It turns out he met a girl called Sue who luckily does not live too far away and they got on like butter and toast. Matt seemed to have a sparkle in his words. Ives is made-up for him. Matt promised he will go into more detail at the pool.

The universe proving its point that Matt and Fran were not meant to be, Ives opened his emails to see the top bold font email from Fran. Apologising to cancel the swim lesson due to her starting a running club. Running is to be her main focus as she has been able to sign up to the New York marathon. It was a bit of a let down for Ives as he had mentally formulated a lesson plan.

The next thing in Ives's 'help his team mates' list was Sue, their Sue, not Matt's new Sue. He has already been working on this. The

Bala Lake swim is barely a week from now. The hibernal water is vacillating Sue's resolve. It never closes for entries probably due to the grimness. There have only ever been two previous events. The water is so cold that the organisers stipulate each swimmer must have their own support kayak. Ives can kayak, having gotten his three star in the Scouts. Sue is definitely capable of conquering Bala's chill.

They are back to normal three lanes now, on these Wednesday nights. Bridgert did not commit any of their Coaches. Lindsey was left to take the sessions turning her day into a ten hour stint. Even though the kids adored Lindsey, her being a breath of fresh air, their numbers dwindled into one lanes worth. This was due to the fact all the enthusiastic Bridgert swimmers had already decamped to Coynus Cads.

"Sue, you have not mentioned it; have you heard about Matt?"

"Heard dribs and drabs. Coach told me he has a girlfriend. Don't know anything of her nor how his holiday was."

"Well, they are both the same."

"What?"

"For Matt the, erm, the holiday, that is the answer to how his holiday went. That he found a girlfriend there."

"Sorry, it is just sometimes you can lose me."

"It's alright Sue. Her name is Sue, she's no relation to you is she?"

"No, there are other Sues you know. Ha ha."

"WHAT? Matt has gotten himself a girlfriend. It is always the quiet ones." Jimmy is doing his usual peculiar warm-up exercises poolside.

"We'll have to grill him all about her. It is not like our Matt to be late. And he was sagging-off Monday and yesterday."

"Hope he is coming." Sue affirms.

"Si...Ji, Jimmy and Sue. Err, quickly before we start swimming, Bala swim, this weekend I think you should both do it."

"Not me lad." Jimmy is quick to say. They all look at an assessing Sue.

"Need a canoeist."

"Got my three star."

"Was hoping Steve would do it with me, but he has not been bothered. I'll have a moment and tell you at the end. So is level three good?"

"The next star up, erm, is instructor level. I think."

"What about a canoe and getting it there?"

"Oh, I, I forgot about canoes, sorry. Erm..."

"Canoe, my Dad has an old one kid, on his boat in Wales. I know there's two on it. One may have an extra hole though."

"And will..."

"Of course Sue, de papa canoe es su canoe. Well Ives's. I could do with a canoe in this lemonade; it was Baltic this morning. Baltic like."

Sue starts the warm-up swim.

"Coach, I am trying to get Sue to swim the Bala swim. If you get a chance tonight please, could you boost her confidence up a bit please so she'll do it."

"Okay, I'll try. Where's Matthew?"

"Don't know, sorry."

"He's swimming in the corner tomorrow. We were expecting him this morning and tonight. Go on you go."

By the end of the session Sue hesitantly confirms she is going to swim the Bala swim this weekend.

Katherine is smarting over not being invited to Bala. Sad, Katherine is privately peeved. Not so much at her friends but detesting herself. When suffering with her OCD Katherine is despondently well-aware when she has unwillingly hurt her friends. Much the same as having a skunk for a pillow, one incident from about three months ago still revolts her approaching sleep: Sue had gotten her diet wrong. In the early hours, fainting in the bathroom at home, badly banging her face on the sink, chipping a tooth and giving her a painful yet comic goatee shaped bruise. A few days afterwards, back swimming, halfway through a set, uncharacteristically Sue got out of the pool to go to the toilet. After a while the Coach was becoming very worried in case Sue had fainted again. That Monday Katherine was the only other adult female swimming. Between sets an anxious Coach asked Katherine could she quickly go into the female toilets to check on Sue. Katherine is haunted by the fact she looked at the Coach as if he was a crazy fool expecting her to take a literal thirty seconds from her ritualised rest-time to check on Sue. Thankfully for Katherine, Ives decided to go instead. As he was

about to timidly venture through the blue door Sue came out safe and sound. Everyone assuming she must have benignly been having a poo. That is one of the cruelest Katherine's OCD has been to her this year, she can deal with her repetitive behaviour. With expertise she comes to terms with her non-invite with the thought, 'If I was my friends, I would not want me around either.'

The Bala upset has come at an ill-fated time; Katherine is not in the most robust frame of mind having had a bit of bad news recently about her running. At heart she is a runner. Katherine has already had issues with shin bone formation and now sadly she has found out she is suffering from running related tendon issues that may potentially stop her running for a year. Yesterday Katherine had mentioned that she will concentrate on her outdoor swimming and getting a bike so she can get into triathlons. Cycling and swimming until her body is better for outright running. Katherine, is normally so highly strung Jimmy is persistently getting told off and swore at by Katherine in the pool. This has only happened that once, about the butterfly-kick, since Christmas, so as they walk to the sitting area he questions Sue,

"There is something not right love about how well Katherine is taking the possibility of not running for a year. You know I'm worried she's in shock like. Then burst with a huge flip-out. A proper Cyrus. Do you remember that time I lost it. That was only a collarbone fall. Out for a month and I could see no point to life. I was ready to sell my Aunt and live in Peru."

"I'm debating different. Picked up over the last few months she seems to be cheesed-off running but her being OCD she would never give-up and now this could be a way out for her."

"That is your girl-intuition that is. Noticing things us blokes haven't. Makes sense to me Sue. Makes sense."

Sue, Ives and Jimmy would have been devastated if they knew how much they had upset Katherine by not inviting her. It was nothing personal. To explain their logic: firstly, Katherine has not yet got a wetsuit. Not yet had any open-water experience, not even at normal temperatures. Katherine's running has regularly taken priority so they assumed that this would still be the case this weekend.

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Bala Day One

Ives, Jimmy and Jimmy's Dad called Tim, are in Tim's van driving to Wales where Tim will do some work on his small boat ready for the warmer weather. It is one of those vans with three alleged seats at the front. Since whenever that type of seat was invented they have been making workmen feel uncomfortable ever since; squashed, forced, incommodious, male to male leg contact. Adding misery to injury Tim is in love with bluegrass music. For three hours from five a.m. Ives and Jimmy were in the orange scruffy-van both pressed to resemble the Clampets and swayed into sounding like the Clampets. Ives was not a happy Clampet. Adding possible injury to misery; next Ives and Jimmy had to haul the kayak, paddle and their camping gear onto a Welsh train and a bus and then walk to the campsite.

"Are canoes allowed on Welsh buses like?" They were soon to find out. To reiterate, Ives was not happy. Although it possibly would not fully fit in the van Tim could have some how got the kayak into, or on top of, his van. Then drove them to Bala. Sue has her car. She could not get today, Friday, off work. Even so Ives lamented to himself, 'but still having a canoe strapped into a convertible's passenger seat cannot be illegal?'. Moaning is not in his nature. Having been in the Scouts he consciously tries to be the most enthusiastic person he knows. It is the bluegrass music. Of all the dangerous physical perils Ives has scraped through in his reckless youth, the closest he has come to dying was in the bluegrass-van. His enthusiasm is still an ember, it will turn back into a flame, but not yet. Waiting for the bus,

"You know your Dad does not use the canoe and it is really old and battered and we don't know if it even floats properly can we not just leave it there? I get a lift back in Sue's car and your Dad picks you up?"

"I know he does not want it lad. But he'll want it back, you know like."

"What? Err. Well if you don't mind, later, please phone and ask him."

We could donate it to the local Scouts?"

"I proper know the Scouts will not be health-and-saftied to use it."

"Oh no, or, WAIT we or them could use it to slide down a mountain, a grassy wet mountain!"

"Yeah, hmmn, he probably will want it back like." Jimmy softly said. Ives smiled, Jimmy thought the smile was because Ives was back to his happy-go-lucky-self. Ives was smiling as he decided that if Jimmy's Dad does want the kayak returned he'll sink it in the lake and orchestrate it to have the appearance and drama of an accident. With the most confused sounding inflection Ives could generate, "Jimmy?! There is, I don't know, it is strange; there is like water falling from the sky?" Jimmy raised a tolerant smile. Within a minute, squinting into the distance and sounding like he has done all this a thousand times before, Jimmy says,

"Here's the bus. Ives, I'll get on first and pay for two. You'll keep the canoe out of sight lad, behind the stop there, so the driver will stop. When I am paying up you'll walk on with the canoe like 'you haven't got a bloody-canoe'." Jimmy smiles as he has amused himself. "And head straight to the back. Plus, with all my Welsh holidays, I've twigged on to loads of Welsh. If we strike lucky he may reckon we're Welsh. 'Two' and 'please' are easy."

"Glad I'm with you Jimmyogg."

"That's Russian." Jimmy says with his arm out.

"Oh I did'ov not'ski know'ski."

"Bore da. Bala, Dau docyn os gwelwch yn dda."

"#Indistinguishable Welsh#" The driver replied presumably with an amount. Jimmy could not understand what he said. Prepared he handed the driver a twenty pound note hoping that would cover their fare. Sneaking a large heavy kayak onto a bus is not easy.

"Beth y uffern." The driver exclaimed looking at Ives. With his head held as high as the bus roof would allow, Ives carried on fumbling down the bus. Jimmy got the driver to make eye contact and smiled. The driver was not happy. He gives them their change and ticket, conscious they are English he mumbles something in Welsh. Jimmy is not bothered, happy to be on the bus. Ives is thinking it is funny.

"Ta." They both say stepping off the bus into Bala town drizzle. Although it is early afternoon the gloom is more of an evening gloom.

"You say you have been to this campsite, Ives lad?"

"A long time ago. It is, erm, if we walk that way, I'll recognise the road where we turn left. It was opposite some big, black and white, big and old hotel pub. Can't remember how far the walk is though. We all had bikes at the time. For the campsite itself, we cannot miss that. It is just past the corner of the lake."

"Was the weather this wet like? When you were here?"

"Probably."

"Whose carrying this beast first?"

"With canoes, I learnt, err. When I was in Scouts we learnt it is easier if we both carry one end each. If it you don't mind doing it that way?" The time-bleached yellow paddle with royal blue blades is shoved down the kayak as far as possible. Ives lifts the front of the distorted-creamy-coffee-colour kayak utilising the three inch toggled cord jutting out; whilst wondering what colour the kayak begun its life. He decides brown is most likely or then possibly yellow. With a surveying look Jimmy, at the rear, copies Ives with the toggle cord between his middle and ring-finger.

"Check the dib-dib-dob nous on you. – Better but we look like a pair of pink elephants. At least no-one knows us around here like." Kayak walking, they remain silent as Jimmy can see Ives is trying hard to make sure he finds the first turn-off." Only two minutes later.

"This is it, there." Ives is ecstatic with himself. Jimmy sees the large white traditional inn and a road opposite. From the level of Ives's excitement Jimmy would have expected them to have arrived at the campsite.

"Well remembered lad... Didn't our bus turn into this street?" Ives looks at Jimmy and says nothing. "If there is our number bus-stop outside the campsite – The campsite we are walking to with the frigate weight of a canoe. If we have gotten off a bus that is going to where we are going, YOU'LL... I'LL... YOU are carrying the canoe back by your balloon-headed-self."

"Well, what? Why? Why me?" Ives can't defend himself for laughing.

Ives has gotten acclimatised to the weather and cheered up. Jimmy hasn't. Fed up of walking after fifteen minutes. Jimmy tells Ives to stop.

"I've just got a text." Jimmy reaching into his pocket, dropping the steady kayak loudly enough to hurt Ives's ears.

"Ooh, so have I." Ives hearing his from his rucksack. Jimmy quicker

to get to his phone,

"It is from Sue. The babysitting-bint. I don't believe it! She says 'Have you left yet? Something has come up in work and there is a chance I may not be able to swim'." Jimmy is angry. Ives looks at his phone,

"Mine says the same." So Jimmy starts ranting and raving to tuned swearwords. Ives is disappointed too. He feels somewhat responsible as he re-initiated them all going to Bala. "Just tell her we are here, with the canoe."

"And it is pissing down, we've took days off work." Jimmy agitatedly adds.

"No tell her it is sunny and there is TV people here." Ives trying to keep a bit of humour.

"She's hearing the truth."

"You are right Jimmy. Don't want to be angry though. She is probably feeling terrible. There is no point upsetting her even more. Say we are here and see what she says. If she does come it will be no good if we have caused an atmosphere."

"I have just texted, 'We are here.'"

Sue got their text, feeling unworthy of her friends that the text from Jimmy's phone never had any expletives in. She sits on a large leatherette arm chair outside the office at her work hating herself. As would happen in a game of pinball, her conscious darts with her narrative-mind furiously pinging associated notions, 'Jimmy and Ives are fun enough to do a sickie.' 'You are old before your time.' 'You are so grim.' 'It seems to me you are dead already.' Sue knows she is sensible, it sometimes makes her feel removed and alienated from her friends. She hates herself for it, often wishing she could be as carefree as them, as someone her age often is. Sue finds herself time-and-time-again mystifyingly being the mother-hen to her groups of friends. It gets her down and hacks at any hope she has in having a contented future. Her mind springs off again, 'Everyone thinks you are sad and boring.' 'You are going to be one of those nagging wives.' 'Your husband will beat you.' 'You will have no friends to turn to.' Her boss leaving the office disrupts her proclivities. From her break she stands to work; heading off down the lonely corridor tenderly singing, "I'll pack my bags this morning just to see where they'll go. I'm standing there sweating 'cos the weatherman said it may snow. I'm courtside for the apocalypse go

ahead and cash your chips..." [Todd Hannigan. Courtside to the Apocalypse. <https://soundcloud.com/toddhannigan/courtside-for-the-apocalypse>]

They solemnly march to the campsite with no more word from Sue. Arriving through the campsite entrance, "Don't think I never clocked-on to that bus-stop lad!" Jimmy shouts to Ives with comic petulance. Feeling warm and cosy in the campsite's reception Jimmy has a humorous 'vying for sympathy' vent at the amused and charmed women who works there. Leaving the reception, already tickled, Ives audibly chortles, at the thought of Jimmy's probable hissy-fit if Ives sinks the kayak.

The campsite is of large to medium size. From walking through the gate, the pebble-dashed offices are on the left. Separating the drive-ways for cars entering, the larger trees blend in to smaller trees. The smaller trees line the horizontal sine-wave shaped narrow track for cars that runs from left to right of the entrance culminating at a flat roofed building that hints it is the shower block. The whole site steadily slopes down from left to right too. It seems natural for them to keep left and walk three quarters of the way along. Behind where they choose, a type of dark pine forest lurks, segregated by a loose meshed wire fence. The rain and wind have eased into a damp flap in the air.

"Where's your tent lad and why haven't you put it up?"

"Brought this instead. It is a bivvy bag. It is like a breathable waterproof jacket for you sleeping bag."

"That's, kinda cool kid. Looks army. It is totally light-weight isn't it. What are you going to do with all your gear in the daytime? You're not taking it around with you, are you?"

"It is only this bag and my sleeping bag, that's all the camping stuff I have. The rest is canoeing stuff. Oh, err Jimmy, that reminds me, in day time can I leave a rucksack with a sleeping bag and bivvy bag in your tent please?"

"Ha ha. There is the nominal fee, which in Wales is, let me work it out."

"Well to keep the tax man out of it how about I get you a couple of beers. If you are drinking."

"That is the Welsh fee."

Ives is squatted down with his green waterproof jacket's hood up. His backpack is in a waterproof garden rubble-sack. Inside his tent Jimmy is sheltering from the damp air. His upper half sticking out into the porch. Jimmy pulls out a camping stove and a tin titled, 'Breakfast In A Tin.' Jimmy sniggers looking at the picture and the inflated described taste of what he audibly suspects to be sloppy beige baby-shirt in a tin. He passes it to Ives to examine.

"Ha ha, they are all separate on the picture, hash browns, bacon, beans, sausages, what are those round things?"

"Probably the Country's biggest pest wherever it is made." Jimmy shrugs his shoulders with half a french-stick in his hand ready to dip once he has found his tin opener and heated the contents of the tin. Reading the back of the tin he answers, "Product of more than one country. The round things will be Americans then." Jimmy smiles to himself. "I suppose you have got a tiny hi-tech army stove to match your bivvy-bag like?"

"I have, it is at home." From hunching over his small gas stove, Jimmy bolts up to attention. Whilst Ives explains, "The ultimate weight saving, why bring a stove and food when there is a village with shops, chip-shops, down the road?" Jimmy looks back to his stove. He makes eye contact with Ives, pulls a face, looks at his tin next to his stove, throws them behind him into the tent, then reaches for his shoes. Ives laughs. "Back to Bala?" Ives grabs his small empty back pack.

They mess about on the way there walking along walls and running.

They buy fruit, milk, bread, cereal, a tin of beans and a bag of salad from the mini supermarket, a bottle of water and some tins of beer for Jimmy and then chips from the chippy. With not many other options, in the dark with their awestruck eyes feasting on the alien stars they stumble to the lake and find benches. With their feast spread out on the newish damp wooden picnic bench focussing on earthly matters,

"These chips aren't bad."

"So are you a soggy-chip-boy or a crispy-chip man?" Jimmy inquires.

"Soggy definitely. But not to the extreme."

"No, you don't want those soggy ones lad. Crispy-chips are proper chips. I bet you when you were growing up your local chippy had

soggy ones. Nurture not nature lad."

"Aye." Ives says in the dark via a mouthful of food.

"Ours were proper top. All us brothers would fight for the crispiest ones, meanwhile our girl would take them."

"Ours were quite soggy. I'll save you my crispy ones."

"Good lad. Bread?"

"Thanks." Ives uses the bread to make a chip and salad sandwich.

"Ives. So where are you up to with this gameshow?"

"I am getting quite far. Best way to explain is maybe show you the to-do list Sue has done. I've got the piece of paper, I'll get it."

"I sometimes feel tight-on Sue's Steve."

"Having to go out with Sue?" Ives joked.

"No, he's a lucky man in that way; I would. What I was saying is, I have decided he must feel a bit intimidated like. How massive a chunk of her life swimming and all us lot are. That fella Steve does not seem to get or understand it all. I know we are all close, us, but he must worry a bit how close we all are."

"Probably. If you are right it is a shame because Steve is such a nice guy. I like him. He has always shown me respect and been nice to me the few brief times I have met him."

"You know I have never met the bloke."

"I would have thought..." Ives fades his sentence and pauses to think. "You'll meet him tomorr—" Ives stops again. Remembering Sue may not be coming. Their eyes are now fully adjusted to the low-light levels. Ives can see Jimmy's piqued mannerism so provocatively finishes with, "You'll meet him here. Next year? If Sue is not washing her hair."

"If I have to go back and drag her by her oh so golden ginger-locks she is coming tomorrow."

"The list." Ives unapologetically changing the discussion. "This is what I have done. I have drafted up letters to send to swim-shop websites. Individualised each one, like you would a CV for each shop. It was not nice writing them. The section 'why I chose each shop,' felt so clichéd and artificial; same as a job application from. The truth I should have wrote, 'I would be delighted if any respectable shop is stupid enough to sponsor us.'"

"There is a diving shop over the water, where I get my diving clobber. They sell swimming stuff too, I can convert one of your letters for them?"

"Thanks Jimmy I will. Matt is going to look over them." Ives

scribbles on his piece of paper, not quite able to see what he is writing but noticing he can feel the texture of the wood beneath his pencil. "I've wrote it on the list Jimmy. Once we know we have got sponsors I have got another list of most of the swim clubs in Britain. We will send out invites to them, telling them what the prizes will be. Whoever applies, we'll slot them in. That is basically it then. We just have to get permission from the pool. Then done!"

"Our swimming baths like?"

"Aye, I'll go for that first."

"Do you not reckon Tohunden will be better like? It is newer and it's spectator area is not a prison-van. Tohunden also lacks those artistic shit-stains up the toilet-wall and on the ceiling. Who can shit on a ceiling, who?"

"You are right about that Jimmy, I totally agree. I think though, erm, I would rather give the money locally. No, what I am trying to say is I would rather stick to what I know. I know Tohunden has higher ceilings but it will soon end up the same. And this may spurt them on to clean Criffud!"

"A leopard can never change it's pebble-dashes; ha ha. You're bang-on the money though about Tohunden: it has the same higher mangers as ours." Ives believes Jimmy's initial statement could be right. He cannot get over the fact he hates Tohunden pool; he is not the only one but no-one can put their finger onto why. Additionally the newer managers there are even more clueless.

"Well at least the rest of the world will get to see what we have to put up with."

Their contriving fades as a group materialises from the gloom and sit at a bench in view from them, about thirty metres away. The clouds have been replaced by a random and slow but cutting breeze. Jimmy and Ives cannot quite make out what is being said but they listen to the tone of their voices to see what mood the group is in. Jimmy is at first wary of them as they seem to be locals and there to drink. Ives thinks that one of the two lads there is sounds like he maybe gay. Ives has always cringed when his friends call him gay. He is grateful for their candour, in how he must come across, it is his own voice he detests. He is not aware directly on how his voice sounds, all he grasps is people struggle to understand him and his friends sometimes call him gay. It not only makes Ives deplore his

voice, it makes him feel his friends must think his whole friendship is based on a dishonest and disrespecting bigot-baffle when he vouches there is nothing gay about him.

In reality Sue, Jimmy, Katherine and Matt do not think Ives is actually gay in the slightest, except maybe for Jimmy. In the natural, fun and anti-anodyne crack between friends it is the only ammunition they have against Ives. Without his quirky voice, walk and nature he could be too Utopian; people would probably dislike him. Ives has a statuesque build, height and appearance, leading to his commanding swimming ability. He has intelligence, a great smile and so forth; people maybe inclined not to like him. Not only physically bringing him down to earth, his own voice misgivings would keep Ives grounded and humble. Being a combination of someone who struggles to get the appropriate words out and someone who when nervous talks a great deal, has given his friends many cringing laughs over the years: the latest being trying to guess what was in a Vicar's bag from the chippy as he was collecting someone from the pool. Ives nervously making small talk said to the stranger with his ten year old daughter in tow, 'I can smell, erm, I can smell, from there I can smell porn.' He meant prawn. With many similar incidents and the impetuousness of any young man all he knows is self despising. Ives computes if friends think he is gay, other people will think it too. If this Welsh group are accepting of their gay friend than they should be accepting of him too. The rest of the group is four girls.

Ives thinks he is a good judge of character so his influence and the group's frequent laughter puts Jimmy at ease. Finishing their food Ives, goes over to the group as Jimmy opens one of his tins from his twelve pack. The group too were trying to sleuth as much insight into the sounding strangers. As far as they could surmise the two are a pair of inner-city lads, boldly sitting in the moonless night probably here for drinking, fighting or even more dramatically, but less plausible, hiding from trouble back home. Feeling slightly threatened they see the large silhouette of the likely scally approach. In the darkness Ives smiles, "Hi, my name is Ives." On hearing Ives's voice the group immediately relax and are actually quite taken with Ives as he continues, "Some of our friends are coming tomorrow but now it is only me and Jimmy over there, it is a

bit boring. Can we join you, pleeease?" One of the girls pats the bench next to her. Ives beckons Jimmy over. Jimmy throws their rubbish in the bin and carts his eleven pack and Ives's bag over to them.

They all get on like old friends. Playing drinking games in the flickering starlight with amber atmosphere. Jimmy and Ives have paired off already. The heaviest-drinking girl, Claire is all snug with a happy-Jimmy. The girl who does not seem to drink much, if at all has identified with Ives. Ives has told her why he does not drink, mainly as it tastes like soggy-dust and due to his swimming. As she is a runner and so having teetotalling in common, the girl is even more smitten. Ives is politely mindful to include the other two girls in the banter. One of the other girls with medium blonde hair is domineering and flirty with the non gay-lad. The other girl with long curly dark hair is very touchy-feely with the suspected gay lad. All sharing and mixing their drinks they are about to open their last bottle, still playing drinking games. Laura, Ives's new best friend, suggests them two walk the ten minutes to town before the off-licence shuts to get them all some more food and drink. The six drinkers all throw in ten pounds for them to buy unspecified drinks in addition to some big bags of Doritos. Laura offers to leave her phone that has been playing her favourite band 'No Monster Club' as background music. The song with sentimental memories from her first holiday abroad, with her family, is first [\[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ex9k8oyFucM\]](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ex9k8oyFucM). Ives stands-up and puts his hand out to help Laura up. The remaining group watch their hadronic hand holding linger, neither of them let go as they cavort into the darkness.

Half an hour later Laura and Ives arrive back to the bench with bags of beer, peach schnapps and cider. The bench is empty. They can hear laughing and talking from the jetty about a hundred metres away, so decide that must be their friends and head there. They are happy with Ives's and Laura's choice of food and drink.

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Bala Day Two

"How far did you get last night?" Jimmy asks Ives from still inside his tent. The weather is dry. Atlantic-salmon coloured clouds are faintly becoming discernible with the approaching sunrise.

"She is so exquisite! Can't believe how lucky I was meeting her. In the light of the shop she was even sexier. I do feel though I may have got further if I actually had a tent to go further in." Jimmy roars laughter out of his tent; with no sympathy to Ives's regret. The persistence of Jimmy's laughter make Ives smile.

"Wait until everyone finds out! Lightweight-camping! Ha ha ha." Jimmy starts laughing again.

"What about you?" Ives has to wait for Jimmy's laughter to subside.

"We done some things, but we were both a bit too bevved." Ives never delved into Jimmy's ambiguous answer.

"I'm meeting up with Jenny later tonight."

"Jenny?"

"I mean Laura. Laura, I don't know why I said Jenny. I really like her. Are you meeting with Claire?"

"Don't know." Jimmy unenthusiastically replies.

In the midst of all their fun last night Sue texted to say she will be there for nine. Ives goes for a small run before his planned pool swim to get warm and run off his dew-soaked-bread and squashed-banana breakfast that his hunger made him eat. Jimmy who often does run declines Ives's invite whilst brushing his teeth. The local swimming pool does not open until ten a.m. On his run Ives remembers he wanted to ask Jimmy about Denise aka Jimmy-Wife. Last night Ives was a bit disappointed in thinking Jimmy was cheating on Denise, but then Ives gathered they must be on the break part of volatile cyclic relationship. Jimmy considers him and Denise to be on a break. Ever since he was young Jimmy has been convinced he is ugly. He is resolute Denise thinks he is ugly and will leave him: that it is her kindness giving him a short respite until she finally leaves him. All of this is nonsense. Denise told him until her tongue sunburnt he is good looking. His noble handsomeness is what initially attracted Denise to him, all those years back. Unless Jimmy changes

his unaccountable self delusions and trying to pull girls in the dark he is in danger of losing her. This is one of those situations that adds weight to ethos behind the maxim, 'It is good to talk.' If Jimmy mentioned his inner daemons to his many friends they would soon quell them.

Sue turns up at five to nine. Ives stands to hug her. Aside from his day pack which he was sitting on Ives's belongings are packed away ready to go into Jimmy's tent which he is still inside. Some what shivery Sue is led to sit on Ives's bag after he pulls a jumper out. She hears an indistinct Jimmy sounding mumble from the tent two metres to her left.

"Have you, have you swam this morning Sue?" As Sue sits Ives passes her the jumper, her reply muffled through the jumper,

"No, not with me swimming later this afternoon. Was going to Zen my ken in the scenery."

"Get cool in the pool with us? It does not open until ten." Ives says as he crouches opposite Sue putting his hands on her jeaned knees for warmth.

"When Jimmy wakes, you two go the pool. Then you can investigate around, at the lake with me if you want?" Sue suggests to Ives and a green tent. Jimmy's voice comes from inside his tent,

"You can do both at the same time love. I didn't cotton on. The baths are right next to the lake. We were alongside it last night. That is why you, Ives, kept saying you could smell a pool. I thought you could smell was because I was drunk."

"That makes no sense Jimmy!" Ives says through a smile.

"What did you two do last night? You seem in a really good mood and Jimmy seems grouchy."

"Lover lad's in love." Jimmy grumps. Ives pulls a face turning the subject onto Jimmy,

"What happened is that, back home, I think Jimmy-Wife has chased Jimmy. Then Jimmy cops off with someone last night and now he feels bad." Ives loudly-whispers to Sue, deliberately blatant enough for Jimmy to hear. Jimmy says nothing. Sue says nothing. Her impending swim is an event horizon in her mind, she safely tucked away the thought for later. Instead focussed,

"I'll come to the pool with you and Jimmy. Not pushing it though. Then we can have a mooch around the lake."

"Come on Jimmy that's our cue."

"Is Sue driving us?" Comes out of the unruffled tent.

"Sue would if Sue could but I can't. I've only got two seats. And you Jimmy, yeah I recall, calling me a, 'Baby sitting bint.'" Sue says about, and amusing, herself.

"He told me he never!"

Before Jimmy responds to Ives and Sue they hear him sigh then, still in his tent,

"I just thought that everyone would be a happier individual if they accept who they are. Sue's a baby-sitting bint. We all know she is but we still love her and think she is awesome. And you Ives, we all love you too, accept! Wink wink. We've let you know we know."

"Looks like Jimmy has earnt himself a walk. Ives I'll move my car closer to the tents. Whilst you get ready to go." Sue more quietly tells Ives. Then she blurts out, "Ives? Why have you put your tent down?" Sue hears Jimmy's hysterics. Looks at Ives for an explanation, who smiling merely shakes his head.

With no idea why but Ives is somehow expecting Laura to be at the pool even though it was never mentioned last night. She wasn't there. Even so Ives, Jimmy and Sue were enjoying their swim. The locals in awe of these three strangers in caps tearing up the place made them feel special.

On the shore line there is that atmosphere. That atmosphere Sue does not care for, Jimmy does not like it nor does Ives. It is the same atmosphere before and during swim meets. The sight of frightened twitches. Surrounded by afraid voices. Humans can also unwittingly smell fear. One petrified person can curdle a crowd. The mass of nervous-messes' spectre primevally permeates into even the most thick-shelled constitution. Matt, Ives, Jimmy and Sue a year or so ago decided to not conform to the fear-parasite's influence. To the dismay of Coach the four of them make as much fun as they can. Funifying swim meets is tricky. Much more often than not, they make mischief. Jimmy consistently reaches his tomfoolery threshold first. Now, in locum of Coach being annoyed Jimmy is ruffled by Sue and Ives running around throwing balls of mud at each other.

Sue is in her full-legged swimming wetsuit half pulled up to her waist; the empty arms dangle past her knee. Her swimming costume is underneath the wetsuit and a navy-blue hoody with a date and event

printed on in cyan. It was one of the goody-bag fillers from a swim last year. The same as most high-end wetsuits, Sue's is monotonously made up of black, its saving grace are some pink spots that decorate the arms and legs. To Ives's dismay over her black thermal neoprene swim hat she wears a luminous-green swim cap. Ives once gave her a matching pink, black and silver cap. She does not wear it. Ives is wearing a cheap shorty-wetsuit over tight black thermal jogging pants, all underneath his fashionable shell hooded jacket that he tailored to fit. Thinking if he falls in he should be warm for a bit. Although cold now, to feel the benefit Ives saves his hat and gloves for when he is paddling. That is why their warming energetic antics are not as silly as they seem. Also for Sue, it is burning off any nerves/excess energy.

Jimmy is sitting at the same picnic bench as last night with a big red and black holdall with Sue's and Ives's gear, mainly towels. A lot of holdalls can look ugly, but this is Ives's that his Sister sent him from New Zealand. It is made of a nice, non-sheeny fabric and everyone who sees it passes comments on it, which is unusual for a bag. But Jimmy sits alone. He is half flicking through his phone and half looking at the frustrated queuers, their numbers not dwindling. They are queueing to get changed in small sailing club room. Getting wetsuits on and off can be tricky. Sue not wanting to follow the crowd casually got changed in her car with a towel on the windscreen and Jimmy and Ives outside the car holding jackets out to preserve her privacy.

A chubby man, mid forties, walks out of the changing room. Jimmy sees the deportment of the people who had been waiting behind him for ten minutes change. As the man walks into Jimmy's view, "Sue, Ives!" Jimmy's call seems pressing, so they run over, already out of breath from their larking around. As they pant. "Get onto that man heading this way, ha ha. He must have been getting changed for a proper-fifteen minutes like, delaying all the diamonds in the queue ha ha he-he, that's why! Look he's put his suit on inside-out. Noob!" Most of the outside of a wetsuit seem more clinging than the inside so that is why he must have been struggling. "He carr, he can't, swim like that. He will probably die." "All them people letting the poor-thing walk past and not helping him. Jimmy do you want to tell him." To accede to Sue, Jimmy shrugs

his shoulders and pulls a face to say 'yes, no big deal'. He is too slow to take his phone and camera off his lap so Sue steps two metres to intercept the man.

"Excuse me. Sir, I think your wetsuit is on inside-out."

"Really?" The man seems confused. The three friends' perplexity best the man's confusion to why an obvious newbie is both wanting to swim in the cold lake and to why he is allowed to.

"Yeah, eagle-eyed Jimmy over there spotted it as soon as you came out of the door."

"Does it matter much? It took a considerable amount of time to put on." The man jovially asks. Ives is standing close-by ready to morally support Sue but she is fine.

"That is why it took you so long. It is less grippy on the inside. You cannot swim with it like that: the insulation is assembled as layers."

"Thank you. It appears I am bounden to have to queue up again. Thank you for illuminating me." The man dejectedly walks to the rear of the queue. The three watch. The man speaks to the previous back markers a woman and a man. Inside-out man touches his suit, either telling the people or asking for a second opinion. He stays in the queue.

"That was kindly and sensitively put Sue." Ives says nodding his head.

"Thanks."

"Politer than what Jimmy would have said and called him. Ha ha ha."

"How come you didn't invite him to get changed in your car?" Jimmy wonders.

"I am kind and sensitive, but not kind enough to let him put his big hairy-crack all over my poor Burtie. Urghh. — Plus he probably has his own car." Sue adds to make herself less vixen.

"I'm fed up of waiting." Ives complains. Jimmy's body language saves him pointing out the same. "Do you want to start now? Not like it is officially timed or anything for places."

"Want to start now. But also want to do it properly. I'll wait for quiff-crack."

Floating in his kayak, Ives's heart had sank. He feared his own stupidity may prevent Sue from competing. All the other kayakers are lined up waiting to start in better kayaks than Jimmy's. Accessorising their immodest kayaks are helmets. Ives knew buoyancy

vests would be mandatory; no-one told him helmets were. Polling he is the only one without, he hopes his woolly hat and now crouched top-half will keep Sue's swim unmolested by prigs.

To the unfamiliar clang of the pistol, most people jog in. Sue is sprinting. Jimmy is taking photographs. All that can be seen of Sue is a white water column. Her two friends there knew the extra kicking is to fight the cold.

It was not even five minutes into the swim when Ives felt alone. They were at the front. Ives was amazed at Sue's performance. If you would listen to Sue's displeased description of herself without seeing her, the listener would think she has shoulders resembling the Forth Bridge and a bison back. Her female-warped unfemale-self-image upsets her. In reality Sue is built delicately, everyone is always confounded at how she can swim so fast and not be muscular. Sue having a weak kick doubles the confusion. In the pool Ives appreciates if he is not paying attention and slacking about Sue can give him a run for his money. However he knows he can always drop her in the pool. Here in the lake, Ives is inspired by Sue, he is pretty sure if he was swimming Sue would have left him shivering for bubbles. She seems so much to be in her element. Ives proud of her with a guilty-nibble of rue that he is not in there too. He chooses to concentrate on being proud of her and the fact she is his friend. He is also determined to train harder to devastate a field as Sue is currently doing. At this point in time Ives puts all his brain power into use to get the best line and keep straight and true for Sue who is maintaining about one and a half metres to his right. Grinning to himself at how well his good friend is swimming, suddenly Sue stops. Ives is disconcerted. He does not want her to lose all the ground she has worked so hard for.

"Can't feel my hands." Sue slurs. Ives thinks and shouts, "Keep swimming! I'll get you mine." Recalling his Scouting days, Ives always disliked cold wet hands caused by water inevitably running down the paddles. He brought himself some reduced neoprene fishing gloves from Aldi, which have somewhat helped but is now trying to take them off with hands already wet, cold and wind chilled. Using his teeth he prises them off his fingers. Ives now feeling the cold wet paddle on his hands pulls hard with each each stroke getting past Sue then bangs the paddle thrice against the

kayak side. Sue aware that is the preordained sign to stop looks for the kayak. She comes right up to the side but does not touch it. Ives smiles. Sue read the smile; understanding she is doing great and she will be fine. Sue reaches her hand up. Ives flittingly hesitates, not sure whether to put them on for her or to leave one in turn floating, now aware nobody informed him of the disqualification rules either. They are so far ahead of everyone's eyes he puts each one on for her then the other. That act instantly made Ives feel closer. Impersonating a mint in diet-cola she is off again.

It was not a race but Sue won. Jimmy broods it may appear he was being solely sycophantic. He could not shower Sue in enough praise as he swaddles the towel around her. Rushing the chilly champion towards the actual showers he stopped speaking realising how disorientated Sue is. As they get to the sailing club room he charges into the ladies showers with Sue in tow. Contrary to the initial impression Jimmy can give out, Jimmy is a deep thinker. He has seen cold people before mainly from the scuba diving he has done with his Dad. He has seen first-hand how to treat different levels of hypothermia. Still in her wetsuit, boldly frogged marched into the ladies tiny changing room and then shower cubicle Jimmy presses the valve. Glacial-cold water comes out. Sue does not flinch. Soon the shower warms so Jimmy quickly alters the controls. Resigning to get his arm wet for a while Jimmy maverickly opts to vigilantly and slowly increase the temperature of the showers with Sue leaving her wetsuit on. Jimmy passes Sue her warm sugary bottle of orange which she takes a sip from, unconcerned the shower is topping the bottle up. Then she is passed a mint. It is only in her mouth two seconds; with her head still down Sue spits the mint onto the shower basin floor and pulls back the corners of her mouth, frowning with her tongue out to let Jimmy comprehend orange-juice and mints do not mix. Confident Sue is compus mentus enough to keep pressing the valve Jimmy shuts the door to keep himself from getting too wet. "You'll soon be snug champ. Stay like that until you are warm enough to get out of your suit." Sue makes an acknowledgement noise.

Seeing how protective Jimmy was of his team-mate, Ives has doubts about his 'sink the kayak' plan. When there was five minutes left of the swim, Sue flung off the glove from her right hand. Ives paddled

to pick it up and noticed the other floating a metre behind and got that one too. In the cold Cambrian water Sue was having trouble with her hands and feet both being exposed. Ives's gloves being too big filled with water and Sue felt hindered by them; so she was not too concerned when the left-hand glove had slipped off her hand. Ives connived he should pretend he was going back to retrieve the other glove then sink the kayak. Now he is not sure. He thinks of Laura and what she would say. He proceeds to think Sue may be glad of the company for the drive home. Sue's Steve is coming in about an hour with Daisy. So Jimmy and Ives can get a lift back with him and Daisy in Sue's car. Still sitting in the kayak Ives stops thinking to notice the back of his legs are soaked. His bottom is wet. All because the kayak leaks. Ives cannot see how the kayak can have any monetary value. Deciding if too much of a fuss is kicked up he could replace it with a better one and only spend five pounds.

To the mid-left of the lake, beached still inside the kayak, away from where the other swimmers are coming in to land, Ives can be seen squirming. He is using his feet to kick off one of the big balls of expanding foam that had been put into each end of the kayak to prevent it sinking should it fill full of water. The revenge on the foam felt good. It had been cramping his feet on the end of his long legs. Ives has to make a decision regarding the foam at the back of the kayak. Although Jimmy is indoors with Sue, others will see him attacking the rear foam. He does not want to leave it inside the kayak: not being sure if it is harmful to the environment. He is certain the kayak is harmless and will provide a home for fish. Leaving the rear foam alone he unbeaches himself.

Unbeknownst, paddling fast along the route that Sue had set down attracts some curious-attention. Kayaking fast felt good. He was glad of the heat it provided. Four-hundred metres from the start Ives has picked his spot, around a bend in the shadow of a small wood of knurled, massive, protruding oak trees. The spot is arrived at, still in deep water, and only seventy five metres to swim in view of the spectators to get to an easy mountable bank to the right of the lake. As his theatrical début performance Ives circles around to give the impression he is looking for something. There are still lots of people milling around waiting for the swimmers to finish or to get showered. Most had binoculars with them. Continuing the

charade Ives with the paddle in his left hand leans his stretched-out right arm to the water. Ives is caught-out how quickly it happened slightly banging his face on the paddle. His wetsuit shelters him from the initial cold shock. His face also gets the brunt of the cold pains. Acting fast, still underwater, he shoves the paddle in the kayak's opening, feeling the foam. Using the high level of force needed, within five seconds he prises off the foam. The front foam has already travelled to the entrance. He guides the foam balls out of the opening. Takes a big breath as he surfaces. He jiggles the kayak pretending he is trying to get back in, but in effect flooding it with water so there is no air bubbles. Surprising quickly this causes the old and heavy vessel to sink like a gannet. Evoking memories of when he was young carrying two footballs, Ives puts his arms over each mangy looking foam ball, holds the paddle perpendicular and kicks. In the pool Ives relishes doing kick exercises with a float held out in front. Most other of their swimmers, save Katherine, hate kick. Ives with his chin on the water kicks. Kicks to keep warm. Kicks to counteract the drag caused by Jimmy's Dad's 1980s pink and purple flamboyancy-vest and the old spraydeck. A spraydeck is the skirt-like belt that covers the kayak's entrance, supposedly keeping the kayaker's bottom half dry and allowing eskimo rolls. Trying not to lose the foam and so littering the lake, he splashes around the corner.

Even being this far out from the shore Ives can hear murmurs. People have noticed him. He kicks and kicks, heading to the scalable bank. He is three-quarters of the way and notices somebody getting into their kayak. He does not want rescuing. Out of breath, not liking the cold but with his target insight, Ives kicks and kicks desperate to get to the bank before the kayakist gets to him so not to have to turn down a rescue. The irrevocably dawns on him of what he has done to Jimmy's kayak. At least he has witnesses. A metre from the bank he still cannot stand. The kayakist is ten metres away, saying something Ives cannot make out. Ives flings the paddle on to the bank. Swims closer and throws the foam balls on. A posh pink Kayak's tip enters his vision to his left. Temporarily ignoring it, sticking his nails into the grass and mud hauling his heavily soaked self onto the ground he hears a Scottish voice,
"Are you alright?"
"Thanks. Yes." Ives still a bit out of breath.

"What happened?"

"Reaching for a glove and tipped over."

"Where is the canoe?"

"It was over there. It sank and these popped up." The Scotsman gave Ives a puzzled look. "It was not mine, it was an old death trap, falling to bits. It was not a canoe but a kill-you." The man is struggling to understand Ives.

"So it has sank?"

"It just did." Ives supplements with a nod.

"You are lucky lad, you could have drowned."

"Thanks for coming to see if I was okay, but I am a swimmer too and can't drown." The Scotsman does not contest him.

"So are you okay walking back to the shore laddie?"

"Yes, thanks again. You are a kind man to come and check on me."

Ives sees the Scot paddle over to where Ives had appeared from behind the bend. Cold, Ives runs to the hut. Jimmy is ten metres from the sail club building walking hands on hips to meet him.

"What. What's, where's the bloody... what's?" Jimmy has no precedent of what to ask. Ives's jaw is shivering with the cold but manages to say,

"Sue dropped a glove. Found it, reaching for it, tipped over sorry. These popped up and hit me." Ives passes him the floats. "I tried to stop it but it sank. It was deep and cold. That Scottish man is looking to see if he can get it." Jimmy is not happy. Concerned about all parts of the situation. He pauses.

"Sue is out of the showers and warm. The organisers are speaking to her. The tit-heads are totally not impressed by my twelve minute warm regime by putting straight into the shower. She is safe and sound though lad. Yeah, you best get in one too. There is no queue. Everyone is being proper square-head sensible and following their rules of warming up slowly." Ives passes him the paddle and runs off to the entrance. Jimmy gives Ives's back a frowned look. Then looks over onto the lake.

Ives, Jimmy, Laura, Claire, some of their friends and Daisy went to the local cinema. Steve and Sue made the most of their night free, going to a restaurant emulating mature adults.

The next day, Jimmy and Ives got a lift home with Steve. Daisy went with Sue.

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Health and Safety

"Hello?"

"Hi Matthew, it's Mike."

"Who?"

"Coach."

"Oh hi, sorry Coach. Didn't recognise."

"So how are you?"

"I'm okay, thanks." Matt said in a flimsy fashion. "And how are you Coach?"

"Good thank you. I am phoning because I am worried about you and all the training you have been missing."

"I know, I am sorry Coach."

"Is everything okay? It is really not like you, it is such a shame."

"Yeah, well no. I was in my Doctors, Coach, regarding, well this is another secret, I was anxious whether I was getting a peculiar colour patch on my hair." Coach remains silent, listening and wondering to where this is going. "I do try to take pride in my hair. Getting to the point, thankfully, I do not have that ailment that results with a patch of different colour hair with evidently no cure. I was pleased to hear my hair is fine; my biggest dread is having a skin-cap, I like my hair. Sorry I digressed, the Doctor monitored my blood pressure and the usual stethoscope, then he was all weird and eventually it was arranged for me to go to see a cardiologist. Well various consultants. I have had an echo-cardiogram, an electro-cardiogram and worn a device that monitors my heart for a week." Matt's voice falters a hint.

"Why, what do they think is up with you?"

"The GP thought my heart does not seem to be beating correctly and that it is deformed."

"Matthew, you should have told me sooner. Have you told anyone? Getting support?"

"I haven't even told my Mother. I don't want to worry her Coach." Coach ascertains Matt is silently crying.

"You should tell people these things so they can help. I would not worry too much if I was you. I can imagine it is hard not to worry. This GP and cardiologist have never probably seen anyone nearly as fit as you. If any of our swimmers, if Ryan Lochte or any athlete

went, they would think something was up with them too. Once you get on the national team you'll have your own doctors who know how to deal with athletes. You should have told me sooner. I have had this happen to lots of my swimmers in the past. A simple heart-rate test and the medics see they have low heart-rate, called bradycardia seen in ill people. What they don't often see is sinus bradycardia. It means a healthy low heart-rate because the person is fit and healthy with a large muscular heart. We are designed to be active. Really you and all the swimmers are normal, it is the rest of the population who is off key. Sorry for ranting, I am annoyed."

"Sorry Coach."

"God no, not at you Matthew! This happened to one of my swimmers about five years ago; he went through months of worry until he got to see someone who knew what they were talking about, with a bit of experience. This specialist, a professor, left me his contact details because I was not happy. If it would have come out of the doctor's wages I would have sued the GP for being the worst type ever - incompetence fused with arrogance. I have had this lots before. Would you want to see this specialist?"

"Yes please."

"When would you be free?"

"I'll clear my schedule to see him." Matt sort of laughs.

"Obviously I haven't seen any of your scans but I'd be so surprised if your situation is not the same as what everyone else has gone through. So don't worry for now. They haven't given you anything to take have they?"

"No Coach."

"They unnecessarily gave one girl this happened to, until they got the results, the GP made her take blood pressure lowering tablets until she got her results. They said it was to be on the safe side. Everyone else I have spoken to said what the doctor done was dangerous. Don't cancel any appointments but also don't worry."

"Thanks."

"It is Sunday, I'll probably not hear from him until Monday. I'll phone you as soon as I do. We all thought it was your new girlfriend stopping you from coming."

"No." Matt laughs. "That is why I went on holiday in the first place to try and get my head together; that is when I met her."

"What does she do?"

"She starting her PGCE in September for primary kids, she could not

get on the course this year so she has been working in her Uncle's office until then."

"Good, good. – Are you okay then?"

"Yes thank you Coach. I haven't told this new girlfriend, any of my friends, you are the only person who I have told, so please don't tell anybody. I will tell people but not yet."

"Of course. If that is what you want. If you are not wanting to do anything strenuous I hope you at least are doing your ankle exercises."

"I will Coach."

"You take care. If you ever want a chat or even to go for a walk you have got my number."

"Yes thank you, and sorry."

"Don't be daft! Speak soon."

"Bye Coach."

"Bye."

Coach Mint had spent the whole day stressed-out wondering if he should phone Matt or not. His caring heart wanted to, but he also wanted to respect Matt's privacy and not want to cross a line phoning him up. He was nearly ill with worry deciding if he should phone Matt or not. He was glad he decided to. Still worried he texts him,

'Take care Matthew.'

This is why Coach Mint is so under-appreciated by everyone bar his swimmers. Everybody except for his swimmers do not realise he is not purely a swimming coach, but friend, ally, confidant, counsellor, a big long list of things.

Monday morning swim and Katherine does not turn up. Having a bad run on the weekend she decided to run instead of swim. That is what she half-told herself; people often have more than one justification for their actions. A big factor was she was still upset about not being asked to swim in Bala. On Katherine's absence Coach hopes he is not going to have to make another phone call. He does not get chance to dwell too much as Jimmy and Ives are fervidly proudly insisting to tell him of Sue's deranged performance. Jimmy is also keen to

coronach about his kayak, not limiting himself to Coach but to anyone who will listen.

Night time lots is said.

The pre-swim talk was taken up with Sue talking about Bala. Katherine had turned up for training tonight. Katherine quietly stands whilst Sue is talking. Ten minutes later and in the water, the warm up has finished and Ives is trying to squeeze his gossiping into the rests. They are swimming what Coach calls 'walking up a pyramid with a kick on top'. It begins on varying numbers. This time it is one length sprint. Rest, then trying to swim the same speed doing two lengths. Rest, then three. Tonight they are doing one to eight. One length kick. Eight again, then back down to one. After the first three, Ives loses ten seconds of initial talking trying to get his breath back. Katherine hardly understands when he asks, "Have you had your results back? I nearly had a bike for you, but it was too big."

"I have got a stress fracture."

"Arrhh, no." Ives genuinely sympathises. With no time to say anything more they push off again. When Sue lands, before Katherine is in, "Sue." Ives is still panting, "Catwalk got bad news about her running, can we..." Ives expresses a sad smile, he cannot verbally articulate that he wants them both to console and comfort her. He asked Sue due to her previous sensitive insight that Katherine possibly could be glad of an excuse to stop running. Katherine lands next shouting,

"Sorry who ever I kicked before!" Jimmy is out of it tonight, pulling-in way after everybody else. Still no Matt. Ives leads them into the single length kick. In the shallow-end now, Ives hears Sue, "Katherine, Ives said..." Leaving them to it, Ives went to push off to let Sue to do what she is better than Ives at. He stopped himself, although he feels uncomfortable getting too close to Katherine due to their age difference, especially with her superficially still appearing pre-adolescent due to her running, he makes an exception, interrupting Sue, and to everyone's surprise stands up, steps towards and hugs Katherine. Coach who was giving the younger lane their set, seen this and he even briefly stopped explaining looking over puzzled and so the younger lane followed Coach's gaze. Then Ives pushed off. A little bit choked, Katherine

looked at a stirred Sue, then an underwater-Ives, off to swim the eight lengths. During the remainder of the set's rests they cared for Katherine as best as they could. At one point a comment, an innocuous comment, by Ives made Katherine feel better about her thoughts of being ostracised,

"Oh, if only the Bala swim was next weekend, without running in the way you could have come to watch or got comfortable swimming in cold water and been up there making Coynus Cads proud." After the set they were allowed to swim back to the shallow-end anyway they wanted.

The end of a set always seems to be a catalyst to start a fresh subject. Katherine takes the opportunity,

"Ives, I do computer design and I have designed you a logo for the gameshow. It is pure black with macho-pink [HTML- FF54AE] logo. It is not girly. I have just left you to write the name in the banner. What is called today?"

"Swizzy-Swim."

"Better tomorrow? - I have left it by my bag." Katherine nods her head to the windows to the right of the pool. As Ives's hug was an astonishment to her, Katherine's show of friendship and respect left Ives standing in the deep-end with his mouth open.

"Thank you so much! Wonder if I have time to look now?"

"Best not, don't want to get it wet. I have also put a huge resolution copy on a memory stick for you, well an old MP3 player."

"What image-mip do you use?"

"Yes 'GIMP' because I can use it on everything."

"So do I. I'm still learning about it."

"You might not like the logo, it is not that good, you don't have to use it."

"Catwalk, knowing you it will be brilliant. Million times better than anything I could do. I am definitely going to use it. I don't know what to say."

"Where are you up to on it?"

"Well I have now got a brilliant logo. I'm about to send off letters to get sponsorship and prizes. Still just waiting for Matt to look over them." Coach has been standing above them but patiently restating the next set to the younger ones in the next lane. The last few weeks, Sue more than Ives has been keeping Coach informed about the gameshow. Sometimes when Ives and Coach talk on their way

home, Ives runs and Coach cycles. Coach and Ives normally talk about real world situations. A frequent topic is how the pupils and staff suffer from the tyrannies of the headmistress in Coach's school.

"I have had a talk to Matthew. I'll look over the letters for you."

Coach tells them.

"Is he okay?" Sue squeezed in.

"Yes. Next is broken IMs."

"Thanks Katherine." Ives whispers. Jimmy comes to the end. Sometimes Jimmy swims slow when he is having emotional problems. They are probably the aftermath of Bala and his sweetheart Denise. They have found it is best to leave him to it. Coach appreciates when he is explaining the sets his swimmers are attentive and listen, even though he can see his swimmers wanting to ask about Matt.

"You should be able to fit in three whole broken ones. See how we are for four. I want you to concentrate on the turns. Perfect turns and the maximum underwater distance you can without losing speed. Go off twelves and twenty-fours. Go on the blue top." Coach then steps away. He can see he has planted seeds about Matt, them

perceiving something is up. Ives hates the ambiguous term 'broken IMs'. He needs Sue to explain her interpretation,

"We are swimming two lengths fly, two backstroke. Twelve second rest then two breaststroke two crawl. Twenty-four seconds rest. Then back to the fly."

"Aren't they half IMs?"

"No." Katherine is amused. "Half IMs are where we swim the whole IM but only twenty-five metre for each stroke. Well the kids would swap halfway down the pool."

"So isn't that hundred-metre IMs?"

"Yes, well no. That is what he meant. Just copy Sue."

"Thanks, I get it now. What we are doing? Twenty-four lengths in total if we do three? Need better terms." They push off. Normally in their rests the athlete's awareness does not extend beyond their own lane. The Lifeguard on duty is Stewart, young but not totally green. Today his authority over the delinquents is decreasing. Whilst away from his high-chair attempting to chastise the worst offenders, their friend, who could move fast for an overweight child, snatches the lifesaving ring from under the Lifeguard's chair, puts it on himself and proudly mortars himself into the water. The focussed, dedicated swimmers missed the conclusion, concentrating on their butterfly.

After the swim Katherine often disappears out of the swimming area, across the corridor, into the ladies-only gym changing rooms. If she was going to tell her friends where she goes and what she does, she would have by now. Due to Coach knowing more than he lets on, everyone assumes it is some OCD ritual she has. The swimmers gather in the foyer, but whatever Katherine does she rarely comes out to leave or to join in the chats. Katherine still in her wets, carting her bags is heading there now; Ives got a brief chance to arrange with Katherine going to a bike shop to try different bike sizes although somehow between them they never definitely confirmed a day. Sensing Katherine was cold and keen to get changed or whatever she does, he looked at and then thanked her for the logo which he had not yet opened from its blue opaque plastic wallet. Once showered and dressed, in the foyer he shows it to everyone. Maybe because they do not realise the significance of it but they all seem slightly blasé about the logo. Nevertheless Ives is impressed by it. Looking closely at it he appreciates the attention to detail. All the fades and gradients. Maybe it is because he can envisage the logo on the screen after the opening credits. Sitting at the round light speckled blue tables Ives carefully places it in his plastic folder taking out a draft letter for the online swim shops for Coach to look at. Sue does not want to be cheeky to Coach but asks, "What is with Matt?"

"He should be back next week. I phoned him. You can phone him." Sue did not push it any further. "I'll read this tonight Ives. To tell you what I think I want you in ten-minutes early and do fifty backstroke starts one after another." Ives laughs. Without any incentives if Coach asked him to do two-hundred, he would, he trusts his Coach.

Jimmy had helped Ives a lot with the draft letter that Ives passed to Coach. Jimmy was good at putting positive and a serious spin on things. He also keenly advocated writing things that have not yet come true. Monday morning, a few days later than stated, Coach passes Ives the changed version.

Ives Knight
28 Marmus Way
Lehane
Arkwell
AW24 1UJ

Dear Chinyll,

I have been a happy customer of yours for many years. Buying mainly cycle and swim equipment. The spirit and professionalism of your website and brand has made me from the beginning imagine you to be the rock to our endeavour.

In conjunction with our local swimming pool we have set up a gameshow for swimming. Teams from all over the nation each weekend will come and compete. What makes it completely different from swim meets and galas is that it is a gameshow. The events are preceded with questions. The swim events are not the typical recurrent swims. The events are carefully designed to be, imitable and fun, but also great swim training both developing technique and stamina. The final challenge will be the winning team swimming against a famous swimmer. The first of whom is going to be local gold medallist Steve Parry. Steve Parry has been fully supportive of the gameshow.

The whole swim club will come to watch their competitors, this wide range of swimmers and family and friends will all be grateful for Chinyll's help for backing the show and providing the prizes.

I think the above alone is exciting enough. In addition it will be a shame to restrict talented outstanding performances to the audience in the pool, so the swimming will be professionally filmed and on a weekly basis placed on a dedicated website and also hosted on Youtube. With the huge popularity of swimming integrated with the skills of our excellent publicity manager we would not be surprised if we have a myriad of viewers across the world. Which also suits your website to a tee. The gameshow is that good, I will not be surprised if we end up filming for terrestrial television.

All this broadcasting though is a bonus.

A hundred percent rate of interest has been achieved when we approached nationwide swim teams. We will run the first season for twenty weeks and have already had provisional confirmations from this number of swim clubs.

We have decided to support our local council swimming pool. The events will be held in this fully insured building. DBS checked staff, fully trained and competent lifeguards.

If this is an enterprise that you would like to be part of, obviously there is so much more to discuss and tell you about our gameshow. I will be honestly delighted to tell you everything you would like to know.

I am excited to hear your response,

Yours sincerely,

Ives Knight.

After reading the letter Ives thanks Coach who broached the topic of insurance. Coach's conclusion was their club, via Bridgert, can host swim events, maybe not for commercial gain though so Ives will need his own insurance. When they swam in a gala down-south last year they all had to sign a disclaimer. This disclaimer was a first and have never signed one since. One of them is still bound to have a copy that is Ives's quick fix plan B. His plan A is: with it being ambiguous he silently chooses he will conveniently forget about the conceivable need and hope for the best.

Coach goes on to suggest Ives will need to get a solicitor. Ives also thinks his plan A and B should take care of that need too. Sipping his water Ives thinks, well does not think his Dad's solicitor friend covers that type of law. He is actually not sure what kind of work Gary does. Deciding to deal with any issues that crop up himself, as much as he can. Then, maybe getting Gary's opinion. Not knowing Ives's plan A and B, Coach predicts and hints all the paperwork will cost a lot of money.

They prioritise to register the domain name Swimseye. Also to trademark, 'Scream if you Want to Swim Faster.'

"This makes it seem so real Coach. Like it is really happening. It is a bit daunting."

"Just one step at a time. I am sure your computer programming friend will be comfortable doing the site registering. I do not know much about it; I presume it is not a mammoth task. Don't lose perspective." Ives recognises the gist of Coach's encouragement. It has helped in many times when he was younger before races.

In his Coach's mind, due to his initial fears for Matt, the possibility of losing swimmers to love is a worry. Next day Coach has a sequestered talk to Ives about not having long distance relationship with Laura, saying either commit and move to Bala or terminate the relationship leaving it friendly in case he ever does want to move to Bala in the future.

It is still dark outside. It has often been said, 'If waking up before dawn to exercise seems normal to you, then you are probably a

swimmer.' Most people are tired this Monday morning. The Coach leaves the swimmers to train on their own over the weekends, save for Sunday evenings if Coach is helping out Bridgert when they are short. Katherine is the most awake this morning and eagerly telling anyone who is listening,

"I was swimming in Eglasby last night. I don't often go that way so was not sure what time the centre was closing. After swimming over an hour and a half, at about quarter to eight they asked us to leave the darkened pool as they were shutting. There was only about five public cortègeing up and down then anyway." Everyone is hovering around. Katherine is telling this story by the vacant Lifeguard chair midway along the pool whilst waiting for Coach to come; he is in the building somewhere, they can see his bike wheel sticking out of the first aid room. The swimmers including the younger ones are docilely sitting on or around the window-ledge that leads to the foyer. "So I gets out, gets showered and dried. I go out the building, turns left and walks through the pitch-black car-park towards those pink cycle-paths next to the playing fields where I got in the pedestrian side-entrance. The bus-stop is only five minutes from there. It was totally dark. I get to the end of the path, and the gate was locked. When I say gate it was more like a tower." Ives nods his head, he knows where Katherine means and that they are very high gates. "So cannot climb over that barbed wire fence, I sprint to the main entrance to see the red lights of car pull off in-front of the closed gate. I was locked in!" The listeners show attention and laugh. Ives feels it is up to him to ask,

"So what did you do?"

"There was a Lifeguard the other side of the gate with her snug yellow fleece on waiting to be picked up. She said that was the manager driving off. She tried to phone him, but he was not answering, probably because he was driving. Although all of the fence did, the double gate did not have barbed wire, but it was even higher. If I was not like a swimmer and or runner I'd still be there now blue and dead in the car park from hypothermia. With the Lifeguard scared I was going to fall, I stepped up onto the lock after about three goes managed to hook my backpack over the spike things on the top. Through the railings I'd given her the liner of the bag with all my stuff in it so it was empty. With it hooked, hoping the machine that made the bag was having a good day, I pulled myself up putting my

foot through the strap. The Lifeguard was reaching through the best and highest she could whilst pushing my foot up. So I gets to the top. I didn't realise how high it was. I don't like heights. I had to drop my bag down. I dangled and dangled. I did not want to let go. The Lifeguard was shouting she'd catch me but I knew she was not strong enough. Anyway my arms were tired. I had to let go. She sort of caught me a bit, but I came down right on my bum. It is still sore." Sue perks up a bit,

"You were lucky you did not really hurt yourself."

"With all your running if you did hurt yourself you could have compensated for thousands love." Jimmy says outraged. Feeling Katherine's tale was told for its comic value, Ives supportively laughed.

In the water after the topic has changed.

"Thank you Katherine for the logo it is champion. How long did it take?"

"I have been doing it over the last few weeks in any spare opportunity"

"To match your efforts, over the weekend, I have been trying and trying to think of a name. I have got two" Ives tells Katherine who replies,

"Go on."

"Got two. The first, err, first is Swimmaculate." Katherine shakes her head. "The second, Swimquisition." Katherine looks at Ives, showing her open teeth.

"Each day you have a new terrible name. Stop. You have found it. Swimquisition. Perfect."

"Is it...?"

"You are saying the word like inquisition, like the Spanish inquisition. You have tortured me with some bad names, it was worth it, for you, not for me. You have got there. I knew you had the brains to."

"Arrh, thanks Catwalk. And thanks for all you honesty and encouragement. You know like, erm, like The Inbetweeners, they done an American version, and I think show 'The Chase' has been all over the world. When copied they can call it e.g. The Chinese Swimquisition."

"Clever. – Did you truthfully like the logo?"

"You are excellent at that. All the attention to detail and your

skill to do all the fading. You have managed to sum up the game.
Thank you."

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The Depression Era

That Thursday night was a bit of a strange night: the first goings on were after using the toilets and washing his hands, Ives filled his water-bottle in the sink. There are no taps for drinking water in the whole centre, save the staffroom. Plenty of over priced bottled water in the vending machine. Those who do not want to lug three kilogrammes of water resort to drinking water from the toilet sinks. They are not even sure if it is drinking water or if it is has been standing in tanks. Their neotenic behaviour makes a big steady-hand game out of filling their bottles without anything touching the feculent taps and sinks. Ives stepping out of the men's toilets sees Sue from behind heading towards the pool. He was screwing the lid on his bottle, so flicked a bit of cold water onto Sue's back. Sue's flinching was a somewhat excessive, but she laughed seeing Ives running away. Whilst pre-swim showering he could see Sue looking glum, sitting on the window-ledge by her bag. Showered, after a quick hello to Sue, Jimmy came along. Sue and Ives said a quick hello to him but no-one deploys any interchange. Everybody is subdued. As Jimmy facially queries Ives, Lee arrives.

Lee had swam from an early age. He is a few years older than them all. However Lee stopped swimming at about the age of twelve. For Lee it was a pang as some of his team mates went on to achieve a lot for their Country through their swimming. About six months ago Lee returned to the club wanting to start club swimming again. Sue, Jimmy, Katherine and Ives cannot remember him from the previous time, with him being that bit older. Matt seemed to think his face was familiar. On his comeback to club swimming, Lee had swam with them for about a month or two, then went off to swim with City Swim club as if it was a better club because they had a fifty-metre pool.

Just over two months ago, Lee came along one Thursday, after about six weeks of being away, keen on leading a lane to demonstrate his improvement. The night Lee came Ives was the only other adult. This was because as it was the only time anyone can remember that a night was cancelled because Coach could not make it. He had a meeting at the school. Ives knowing this still turned up keeping his routine.

Not arcane-ordained, Lee arrived. Having a lane each to themselves was not ideal for Lee as the training session subtlety turned into a race. Ives really clicked with Lee as soon as he came: having a similar temperament and sense of humour. Not something he would ever mention but Ives thought Lee had a cool voice too. Raspy and deep. Not sure what sets they are going to do, they laugh and joke then decide after doing the regular warm up of twelve-twelve-twelve they will choose a set each. Ives opts for his speciality long swims on front crawl. Lee chooses IMs. To Lee's disappointment, Ives still trounced him.

Since that day Ives had been expecting Lee to turn up one day for an implicit rematch. And here he is. Ives, glad to see Lee, still learning social etiquette not wanting to offend his friend, bit his tongue; though he was eager to say, 'been away training and back for a rematch?'. Also Ives wanted to speak to Sue but she was having a natter with some of the sporadic swimmers, skilled and experienced swimmers with no dedication who only turn up every so often. These ones are in their early twenties and have no discipline or they have a life, depending on which way it is looked upon. Anthony is one of them, here with his girlfriend, Emily. Sue is telling them about her Bala swim. Ives could not put his finger on it but he knew something was up with Sue. Alston process out the lanes.

Jimmy is near the whiteboard overdoing his warm-up exercises. Stepping into the water polite not to splash Sue, Ives notices Coach directing the regulars into this far right lane (from how Coach sees it), technically the faster lane, with Lee, Anthony (who happens to be Lee's distant cousin) and Emily with some others sent to the lane to its left, the third lane from the foyer-window.

"Are you okay Sue?"

"No." Ives is taken aback by Sue's plain answer. "Cheesed-off dot-com. Did not want to come. Been having such a hard time from everybody today. Steve and I were arguing with each other in a manner we never do, telling each other to shut-up and that. Daisy was being smarmy to me. Stormed off to come here but I do not feel like it. Thinking of getting out."

"That is sooo not like you. You look also look really tired." Ives pauses. "Or is it teary?"

"Tired."

"I know how you feel, remember that time I got out. That was because everyone in the day had been horrible to me. You poor lamb."

"Don't know what to do. Help."

"You are changed and in the water, do the warm up and then decide."

"How did you feel when you got out that day?"

"Erm, I didn't feel any better, but I went straight home. You have got friends you could go to."

"Will go home too if I am going. I'll take your advice Ives Wi'an and do the warm-up then see. By the way, where has Lee been?"

"In touch with his inner-city-swimmer." Ives seen Lee pushing off. Setting his goggles he gave himself the target to catch him he gets to the wall. He did. Ives can remember Lee being a bit delusional last time about being faster than Jimmy. Ives was happy assuming if Lee had seen him he will have made his point. He'd lapped him after about a hundred and fifty metres. After that it was not too much of a head-to-head as due to the high turn out, some of the regular but slower swimmers were in Ives and Sue's lane and in their way. Ives heard Sue for the first time ever exasperate when she had to stop after catching one of these swimmers, slow-Mark. There is plenty of room in the lanes for swimmers to swim down one side and return the other side. On more relaxed occasions in the rests the adults' attention is sometimes drawn by Coach to the chaos in the kids lane. The swimmers take amusement at Coach's frustration and at looking over at the kids not grasping or innocently ignoring the swim-clockwise concept. For the adults swimming frontcrawl there is room for one swimmer to take a chance and swim down the middle to overtake slower swimmers calculating no-one is doing the same in the opposite direction. This is only normally needed in long sets. Tonight with slower swimmers in the water Sue is uncharacteristically really irked. Swimming slowly behind someone is really frustrating and difficult; it is easier to swim fast than unnaturally slow. Plus Sue is well-aware having someone swimming behind you is unsettling. A cry often heard by Lifeguards is swimmers pivoting around and screaming, 'Don't touch my feet!' For now Sue chose to turn in mid-water and head back to the start. Counting two halves as one. The twelve-twelve-twelve, warm-up is twelve frontcrawl, twelve backstroke and twelve choice.

"Are you feeling any better?"

"No."

"Are you doing the next set?" Sue does not answer as Coach is walking over to tell them what it is.

"Fifteen lots of hundred-metre sprints." Probably one of Sue's favourites. "Being kind giving you a good forty seconds rest. Treat every swim as a race, no saving yourself. Go blue top Susan and Ives. Well-done you two. The other lane had not yet finished". Sue was not aware of Ives's competing with Lee.

"Shall we go now?" Sue seemed un-phased by Ives wanting to go thirty-five seconds early. Sue swam hard and fast. After the first hundred. "Can we call it thirty seconds rest?" Sue does not interrupt. "I want to keep ahead of them." Nodding to his right. Ives thought Sue's dark-side must be out and about as she seemed just as keen to turn the screws on the other lane. Anthony and Emily were even missing bits off and so too older Daniel who had also now turned up late. Having the same ethos as Anthony, older-Daniel randomly appears a dozen times a year. Not bad at sprinting but have not swam their dues recently to keep their stamina. Off Sue and Ives went again. They had younger Daniel in their lane, he'd been left behind as well as Jimmy. Jimmy although being a marathon swimmer is no slouch. Ives knew they were doing well to leave Jimmy behind in the sets. In just fifty-metres Ives noticed Sue gain nearly ten metres on Lee. He hoped Lee had noticed. Sue was somewhat oblivious maybe vacant or focussed.

They both put everything they had in that sixty length swim, feeling drained but strong.

"Staying in for the next set, but later may get out five minutes early so not waiting for a shower." Of the three blocks of showers with three showers in each, only one block, the far block works. One block has been running ice, since before Christmas. The other block ninety percent of time gives a fridge temperature the other ten-percent a briefly-bearable stream - if you don't stay under for too long. It is an iniquity: aside from discontented customers, it leads to cold/ill kids, un-showered people and a crestfallen Sue deciding she will get out five minutes early.

Finishing so far ahead of the other lane Coach had not noticed how quick Sue and Ives had gotten through the sprints. They had to shout,

““Coach! Coach!”” To get his attention away from the kids he was instructing. They always revel in shouting the word 'Coach'. They think it's fun. Lee, Anthony were having the full forty seconds rest. Waiting for Coach they heard Lee ask,

“Do I need to go to the doctors?” Everybody who is not swimming looks at him. You all say go on the red top. And then sometimes we go on the blue top. I can only seen red and black!?” Everybody laughs, including Sue. Lee looks even more worried. Anthony stops laughing first so he explains,

“Yeah, it was always red and blue on the old clock that broke a year ago.” Still smiling, Anthony dips his head slightly, “Everyone still calls it red and blue, although it is red and black.”

“Thank God for that. I thought I was going colour blind or something.” Again they laugh in understanding how it must have been from his point of view and the fact that it has took him this long to pluck up the courage to ask. That lane push off, with five lots of a hundred to go.

The subsequent set for Sue and Ives is,

“Eight twos going off fifty seconds, diving in.” Basically they have fifty seconds to swim two lengths, climb out and be ready and rested to dive back in. Does not sound too difficult but after a long night of swimming even the climbing out is energy sapping. “Just eight of them. I know Sue likes frontcrawl. Well-done you two.” Ives suggests Sue lead these. Last time they swam this set Sue had to fight to keep in the game. Tonight she was so much better.

With about ten minutes left they were told to swim one butterfly, two backstroke, rest, two butterfly, one backstroke, rest, then back to one butterfly and so forth. “Just eight of them. Fifteen seconds rest. A quiet Sue states she is only doing four.

After the four Ives comically formally shook Sue's hand, he was too out of breath to speak. Coach had told Jimmy to spend the last four minutes getting the feel for both two and four beat kicks, whilst holding a float. In contrast Ives is enjoying the feeling of speed in this set of short swims. He is halfway down the lane on backstroke when he feels something underneath him. He stops any swimming. His momentum kept him horizontal on his back whilst feeling something abrade from his left shoulder-blade down to his kidney. Able to look down to his feet, he sees someone else's feet.

He sees the top of Jimmy's grey swim cap by his waist, then the rest of Jimmy's head. Jimmy is not amused. Ives has no clue what happened. Jimmy inhibits his profanities, chastened by the fact it was also his doing for swimming so slowly. Not sure what had happened Ives apologises anyway then promptly finishes this length then his two butterfly.

Undoing the lane ropes at the shallow-end with no-one to talk to Ives sees Emily the Lifeguard. Emily, not Anthony's Emily, is Lucy's sister and has just been relieved from watch by another Lifeguard. Emily is heading out past the shallow end, still in the water Ives looks up and cups water with his hands onto Emily's flip-flopped feet at his eye-level. He compliments her Brazil flip-flops then asks smiling Emily,

"Did you see what happened when I, when me and Jimmy bumped into each other?"

"Hehe he he, yes it was funny. I saw it happening from a mile off. You were shooting down the lane and 'Jimmy?' was swimming really slow with the float. You swam right over him, he he hehe." Emily had the cutest giggle he has ever seen in his young life.

"Did you not..." Ives was about to joke that Emily could have blew her whistle to alert either of them, but doubted he could pull off the correct intonation to make it sound funny, instead, he continued, "Didn't you film it, get it on the internet?"

"You'd be surprised at some of the things we see."

"Ha ha, and some things you don't want to." Agreeing, Emily resumes her journey to the staffroom.

Whilst Lee was waiting for a shower him and Ives had a quick chat. They swapped hints and ideas about their progress in tweaking their striving-for-perfection stroke. Lee has been performing lots of drills such as swimming with fists. Ives shares his ideas about mindsets and letting the cerebellum take care of the intricacies. Ives was also wondering if he would want to come on any open-water swims they are set to do this year. Lee was keen to. Lee did not mention anything about the gameshow. Ives was happy it was still shrouded and ambivalently disappointed that word had not spread like wild-fire.

Ives texted Sue when he got home. Told her how many lengths they had

swam, which was not bad for someone who had their spirit trampled. She told him she cried in the cubicles and also when she got home; in addition Sue mentioned she was tired. The next morning Ives used the last of his credit to text Sue,

'Felt bad last night not knowing how to help, so I said a prayer. I hope the prayer still counts as I was multitasking - having a poo at the same time :-)'

'Haha, TMI. Just so tired. Dont kno whats wrong with me. Thanx 4 the encouragement last nite. If it was not for u making sure I got a swim in, my night would av bin a total-washout.'

Was Sue's reply. Weary of his two pence phone credit. Ives reminds himself to check his savings. Every school and college holiday he has been able to find some terribly paid job. Saving the money to get him to the next working opportunity, but he is sure his funds have nearly dwindled. As an example, last summer holiday he spent his time strawberry picking.

Ives had come to the conclusion that being a competitive athlete messed with moods. Maybe it was the Bala swim that has turned Sue.

Matt was equally not good.

Matt on his own went to the heart specialist Coach knows. His appointment was in a local NHS hospital. The doctor was very caring. After many examinations he summed up to Matt, "All my tests are telling me is that you are a very healthy and fit individual. There is not many other individuals on this planet as fit as you. The others will be your swimming friends and those weird people who run." The doctor has a wry smile, "Such as myself. You have already done the battery of tests selected by your GP's Cardiologist which I have seen the results of some of them. I have arranged for a copy of the outstanding ones to be forwarded to me.

If everything comes back clear on those, which they should, you have nothing to worry about and I see no reason to have any further investigations. I will write to the GP who instigated the tests. By the way, in my opinion I am certain you have not even got the woolly hair trait that the GP alludes to in his letter. So do not worry. – Say hello to your Coach.”

“Thanks. I feel like you have lifted a weight from my mind. Enjoy your running.” Matt says as lip-service. Matt had always envisaged if he ever got the all clear he would be so ecstatic he would be doing the Charleston in the Doctor's office; especially considering how worried he has been. His best rationale for his strange estrangement is that his mood will lift when this good news sinks in or when all the tests have been inspected.

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Talk

Currently, a few days after meeting the Professor, Matt did officially get the all clear. A text conversation between him and Sue,

"Now we kno ur well how cum u arent back?
Its not the same without u. Bin really
missing U. XX"

"Thanks buddy. I am trying to juggle things
at the mo. You know how it is."

"What av u got2 juggle?? U mean its ur nu
girlfriend Sue stopping u from comin?? We r
all worried over U. XXX"

"Can't blame my Sue. It's just life."

"What is?????? Stop being sooo enigmatic, it
is cool but its frustratin. What is up?????
Do I ave drive zur house? It is gud2 talk
bout problems u kno."

"You're right. I am not trying to shut you
out Sue. We will meet up and have a tête-
à-tête, but not tonight."

"K when? X"

"I'll work around when you're free."

"Thursday nite b4 swimming at around 630 X?"

"Okay thanks buddy."

"We r all worried over U. XXX"

"Sue you're not still not your-merry-self." Jimmy had noticed Sue still seems vacant.

"Yeah don't know what it is. Did not enjoy it tonight." That was all the talking Jimmy got out of Sue this rainy Wednesday evening. Instead he talks to Ives who has approached looking nonplussed,

"What are the showers like Jimmy?"

"They are acceptable? Barely. A lot better than the lemno we've been swimming in lad. A lot better." Ives pressed the plunger to start one and keeps his hand underneath the flow until he his happy to get in. "Sue's not happy." Jimmy tells Ives.

"Neither is Matt by all accounts. It is a shame."

"Well how are you doing Ives?" Jimmy being light hearted.

"Why fabulous. And your good self?"

"Tremendous!"

"Actually I'm quite happy. I've had some good developments with Swimseye."

"That's my lad. What is it?"

"Two things. By the way I haven't told anyone this with them all being a bit glum, didn't want to make them sadder. From all the swim meets we do all around the country, I don't ever get as many phone numbers or Facebooks as you and Matt. But the emails I have got I have kept in touch and been nice to them. They have all asked their Coaches and can come to the gameshow in the Autumn. So I could easy

fill in the numbers just from people we or they know." Jimmy pats Ives on his back. Ives laughs. He always laughs at Jimmy. In the showers Jimmy uses overmuch shower gel and shampoo. He covers himself in foam. This tower of foam only reveals that something is alive underneath by the small hole formed by his talking. "The second bit of news is that Chinyll sent a letter back. The letter was, err, thanking me for my letter saying they will be back in touch. I don't know what all that is about but it seems good. It was not a no." Jimmy slaps him on his back even harder, too hard. Through the foam Ives hears a muffled, "You should have told Sue and us all. They will be chuffed like. It will be exactly what they need." Ives did not want to tell them. When he is in a bad mood he finds it difficult to transform into a socially acceptable excited mood so does not want to force Sue and Matt to. He plans to tell Coach though.

Finished in the showers Ives leaves Jimmy, rinsing off his foam, to go get his stainless steel water-bottle adorned with a DIY band of small photographs of famous swimmers. He had left it at the deep-end. He unusually bumps into Katherine who has not done her habitual vanishing act.

"Not disappeared?"

"No. I want to try and sneak into the gym. My running is going terrible."

"Knowing your high standards I am certain you are doing fine."

"No. I even think my running Coach is giving up on me. People who I have always been faster than are lapping me."

"How come?"

"This problem I have had with my shins has interfered with my training. I am like a big white, or sometimes pink, slug."

"Don't worry Katherine. Everyone has blimps. You of all people will be fine. I suppose it is better to have these blimps now than when you are older and in the Olympics."

"I suppose. I've entered an aquathlon this weekend."

"Aquathlon, is that swimming and running?"

"Yeah."

"So what's a duathlon?"

"Not sure."

"Don't worry about your injury. It is a sign you are on the right road. A sign that you are pushing and moulding your body in the

shape of a runner. I'd be surprised if any athlete got to the top without experiencing any blimps. These blimps mean you are an athlete and not a normal person. Just don't give up, rest your injury yes but you're doing the right thing isolating and exercising the running muscles in the gym and keeping your fitness up by swimming. Well that's my opinion anyway."

"Thanks. I'll go now."

"Well if I don't see you tomorrow morning good luck with the aquathlon." Katherine has never swum on Thursday (tomorrow) night as it is her running night. She has Fridays off as she is normally running in races over the weekend. Katherine managed to sneak into the gym. The mood she was in she did not care if she got caught or not.

In a text at five p.m., the following evening,

"Matt I'm sorry I av bin caught up in work. Dont even kno if I'll be late 4 swimmin. Can we av r talk nxt wk?"

"Sure, that's no problem buddy. Don't stress over it. Hope that you can swim tonight."

"Thanks Matt, I hope so 2!!!"

Matt was disappointed but also glad that Sue called off the compelled meeting he was dreading. He was feeling low and needed to chat to somebody but he was not ready to go to the pool and see all his team mates.

Matt did not hear anything from anybody over the whole weekend. The night the management took from the swim club was Tuesday nights. Remorselessly it is nothing more than a twopenny money making scheme. Still getting the same revenue from Coynus Cads but stopping them coming on Tuesday and having Coach Mint teach adults to swim.

The bunch who signed up are mainly old people. Coach does not say if he is fond of teaching these or not. Matt decides to wait for Coach outside the pool and catch him on his way home from this lesson.

On his mountain bike, waiting up the footpath away from the entrance and gaze of any of the pool staff who come out to smoke, Matt keeps on having to throw back a football to kids who have climbed inside a locked five-aside-enclosure. Coach on his bike gives him a huge smile,

"Have you come to go to the gym?"

"No. I have come to see you Coach." Matt felt guilty. He has not come to see how Coach is but to unload on him. However he cannot bring himself to burden his Coach of his thoughts. Coach Mint seems stressed. They ride away from Matt's house along Coach's route home, via Aldi. Initially Coach talks about how the leisure centre is giving him a hard time again. The talk mellows into more genial affairs such as the weather and football. Outside Aldi after Coach has finished his shopping Matt asks,

"Did you get everything? You get your shepherd's pie and lasagne?"

"Yes thanks. At the tills though, I asked, 'I'd also like to buy a wasp please.' The girl said, 'What? We don't sell wasps.' I said, 'Are you sure? There's one in your window.'" Matt smiled. "Thanks for coming down Matthew it was good to see you. Are you swimming tomorrow?"

"It was good to get out of the house. No, sorry I am not ready to yet."

"Well come and see me Saturday morning after I have done the kid's swimming lessons. We'll have a talk and if you want to you can have a swim afterwards by yourself."

"Thanks Coach I will." Enjoy your lasagne. The Coach lives alone. He had popped into Aldi to buy a chilled meal for his tea whilst Matt minded his bike. Coach's wife sadly died of a severe asthma attack leaving him to raise his two daughters and son. He did an excellent job of raising the family who have moved out and started families of their own.

The same as the weekend gone, Matt heard nothing from anybody the rest of the week. Not even Sue. Saturday morning at about twenty past eleven, he sits at Coach's usual table waiting. Through the large window onto the pool he sees Coach talking to some of the

parents. Matt notices one of the dark blue permanently attached plastic chairs to the round table has broken since he was last inside.

Coach glad to see Matt, leaves his beige backpack next to the table and excuses himself whilst he goes to the vending machine to get his coffee. Coach's card does not give him access to the centre's staffroom.

After Coach has said, with an amused frowny-face, the coffee tastes like, 'a Columbian's sweat,' Matt disjointedly says what he had rehearsed,

"As regards to my swimming Coach. I don't know if I am going to get anywhere or achieve anything anymore." Matt cannot understand why Coach looks relieved.

"I knew that's what was up with you. Don't forget I have seen it all before."

"Oh but I am not insinuating you have any blame Coach. You are the sole reason I have gotten this far. You are the reason why we all are who we are."

"Thanks, I think. We have all been missing you. If you trust me Matthew the best thing you can do is come back, you'll feel so much better."

"It sounds right but I cannot see the point. It is looking very unlikely that I am going to get to the Olympics or even get on the National squad."

"Well you definitely won't not-swimming." Coach points out. Matt's gentle voice would not be out-of-place volunteering on the Samaritan's helpline. With reversed would-be roles,

"I know Coach. It is alright for Sue, Ives and Jimmy. They are excellent swimmers and will make it to the dais. But, if they don't they are distance swimmers. They can go onto all the open-water events, the marathon swims, triathlons there are a lot more options for them. Me, a sprinter I am more limited. And it seems as if everybody wants to be a sprinter. It is all Bridgert train for, sprinting."

"You are a smart lad. You are right about distance swimming. Again though you are not going to get anywhere sitting in your house. If anyone wanted to exchange their swimming for something equally productive and wholesome that is understandable and reasonable, but

just quitting all together is wrong. However, for you, in your case, do not give up prematurely, it is wrong. You have not peaked, you're still improving,"

"But—"

"Hang on, just don't take my word for it. All your times are documented so you can see you are improving. Don't give up."

"Okay what about this, when the time comes if it is apparent I am not going to make it, will you be upfront to tell me? Is that a deal?"

"No." Coach states simply. Matt feels like he has been ambushed.

"You know I tell people off for having externalised goals. It is not in your power if you end up in the Olympics. What is in your power is if you achieve your time goals that you have set for yourself, that you have discussed with me. We will still keep setting goals. Swimming is not about competing against others, it is about yourself, your times your movements. And don't forget people keep improving and have achieved their goals into their late thirties and even forties: look at all Kevin has achieved. What I will be upfront about is, if you stop putting the effort that is needed. That what separates the elites, putting that extra in. I have said all this before, you know it off by heart, make swimming every part of your life, how you sit, so you can do your ankle exercises, even when you walk mimic you swim breathing. Keep on keeping on."

"Thanks." Matt is overwhelmed, not sure what to say.

"If you ever get this way again, talk. Talk to people sooner." Matt nods his head to agree. "Will I see you Monday morning?"

"Can I leave it to the night time? Sometimes Monday mornings can be..." Matt searches for the most appropriate word, "Emotional."

"Of course. Are you swimming now?"

"Yeah I'll put some in."

"You look a lot better than you did on Tuesday; you looked terrible then."

"All this is not part of your job, counselling people."

"Don't worry, it has all happened before."

"But thank you Coach!"

"Did you hear about Katherine?"

"No."

"She won the duathlon she done and is now on the England team. She was in the paper. They mention me but spelt my name wrong." Matt made the initial attempt to seem pleased but he knew he couldn't.

"Good for her but that makes me feel worse." Coach looks puzzled at him. "From all accounts her running is not where she would expect it to be. She is stuck at over eighteen-minutes for five kilometres. And she swims horrible; Sue is so much of a faster and a better swimmer, so why hasn't Sue been selected. Sue could, if she ran, easily out run Katherine, she's got the build." Coach says nothing, he is not sure what to make of what Matt is saying. So Matt continues, "I hope this is not jealousy: it is not about Katherine per se. I wish her all the best, she puts the hard work in and deserves and earned every success and party-cannon. It does not feel like envy, more frustration about us. That I haven't, that Sue hasn't, Ives hasn't and Jimmy hasn't. Even if you say 'all equally as good' as her. So yes, it is frustration that no-one has achieved that recognition. Mixed with pride for her." Coach can now comprehend where Matt is coming from, he knows that Matt is not spiteful, well he thinks he does, this is the most he has spoken to Matt for a while, it is all or nothing with Matt.

"What you are forgetting is that she is in a different age category to all of you." Matt nods in agreement,

"I do occasionally forget that Katherine is them many months younger."

"This goes back to what I said. It is all about competing against your own goals, it is not about other people, keep working on your targets and good things will happen."

"Yes. And well-done to Catwalk and well-done to you getting her to National level. How did they manage to misspell your name?"

"I am going the Aldi." Sean the lifeguard passing overhears the 'Aldi' and shouts,

"Lidl lad!" It is his joke. Coach laughs and continues,

"Getting a sandwich, I'm starving. Then taking the grandkids to town. Will you mind my stuff whilst I go sign out? I won't be a minute."

"Yes but I'm not protecting your hat with bird-muck on."

"Hey we won on Wednesday." Coach says defending the Everton crest on his hat. Matt taking in what has been said sits at the round table with fixed chairs looking at the Coach's daft EFC blue beanie hat, outdoors he always wears a hat, some better than others. This is his warm weather one, with Everton football club's badge embroidered on

both inside and out as it is reversible. The current inside is lighter blue. Coach heads back to the tables from the reception / office smiling telling Matt,

"Last night, on my way home I was passing the betting shop by the Aldi and I heard a bloke kicking off, someone shouting the odds, think he was wanting to get even." Anyone else would cringe at the terrible joke, Matt joins in,

"I hope that place is not going to the dogs."

"Things get heated after a kick-off. No one likes foul play."

Matt has his swim. He felt a bit clumsy, nothing too bad though.

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Bobbing

Monday morning.

Ives has come in with his new letter to show Sue. Sue is explaining to Jimmy,

"Don't feel like swimming, so much is brewing. Had Daisy in and out of the doctors and finally have had an answer after I went to A and E and refused to leave until we got answers. She had a rash on her back that was getting worse and worse. It spread from her back to neck, getting close to her face. The GP was rubbish saying it was just her age, acne and all that. Eventually got to see someone nice, as soon as he asked if Daisy had recently had a sore throat I knew he was no idiot. Turns out she has a type of psoriasis brought on by a high-immune system, the treatment is UV light. As I am there and acting as her guardian, had to sign all papers saying I understood the risk, the small risk of it causing skin cancer. Was horrible."

"Well-in Sue for standing your ground. I'm not going to swear to you, but what is about fifteen inches long and hangs in-front of a 'bum'-hole? Ha ha, a stethoscope. Ha ha. Seriously love, Daisy will be fine so don't you worry one iota darling. I have been told people who have or had psoriasis are the healthiest population. One of my cousins had, has, it." Ives does not intrude and so leaves Jimmy and Sue to speak privately. The letter in its plastic-wallet can wait until after. They are tarrying where most of the club leave their bags, until a Lifeguard gets poolside so they can get into the water. Ives turns around to see Katherine, looking unsettled; appearing more diminutive she hushes,

"Ives, I forgot to BOB and I need to. I would not ask but have you please?"

"Yes, I've got a whole big roll, I'll get it for you Katherine. It not like you to forget."

"No. I know sorry. I'll pass you them back." Ives looked at her, with a smile shook his head at the old 'borrowing toilet roll' joke. That was not what Katherine meant.

"You've lent me loads in the past, don't worry." As Ives walks over to his locker with Katherine to get his toilet roll,

"Ives? When the first contestants come to your gameshow and you send them prestigious invitations, it is not a good impression stating at

the bottom 'Bring Own Bogrolls'." They both laugh. "No. This place IS crap." It saddened Katherine to say.

"It is funny in a certain way." Ives says as he unlocks his locker and puts his Union Jack trolley token back into the slot, then roots through his bag for the toilet roll.

"I wonder if we are the only swimmers in the whole country who have to BOB?" Is Katherine's conspectus to alleviate her desperation to go the toilet.

"Bring your own chlorine."

"Bring your own water." Katherine trumping Ives who can see she is needing to go so keeps quiet, puts this second Chinyll letter back and passes her the toilet roll which is in a plastic Asda bag. All swimmers protect their belongings from water. Katherine trots off.

Ives heads back over to the group still waiting for the Lifeguard to come so they can get into the water. It is getting close to five past six. At five past one comes in looking worse-for-wear. It is Stacy. They all start to walk over to the deep-end. With Sue, Jimmy and Ives being the older ones they quickly get the lane ropes sorted. Jimmy grabs all four and swims to the shallow end with them. The centre now only allow clubs to use actual rope, that cheap blue nylon stuff builders use. The proper lane ropes that most other pools have that are needed for competition have been taken from their hangers and so dropped to the plant room underneath the pool: the inner cables were badly frayed and dangerous. They are made from steel wire rope threaded through plastic floating discs. Although unyielding if a swimmer unintentionally hits one with their hands they are much better to swim with as they diminish the waves. With the lanes sorted Sue is about to dive in. Ives shouts,

"Wait." He jogs up to her in a manner that disguises itself as a sort of walk so he cannot get a whistle blown at him for running by Stacy if she is awake, "Can we wait thirty seconds for Catwalk please. She forgot to BOB, so I leant her. I think it has badly set off her OCD: her eyes are red and angsty. You know what she'll be like if she thinks she has started later than everyone else."

"I've left it on the side by Sue's bag. Thank you. You have spoiled me now though. It was proper soft. My cheap stuff is going to feel like sandpaper now." Katherine's well rehearsed cheery comments fails to mask her nauseated skin. Nevertheless Ives plays along,

"Ha ha, that came from college."

"It is such an essential part of our swimming kit. I cannot believe I forgot mine..."

"Get yourself to the market! Cheap but soft. Also any colour." Jimmy piping in. "Although the best and most luxurious thing I have ever used was when I was camping, a handful of Welsh-rain soaked moss—"

"Urghh!" Everybody shouts, laughs and swims off.

The talk is dominated by Sue having a hard time at work, her still feeling unmotivated and Katherine being selected for England. Jimmy privately suggests for everybody to chip in to buy her a triathlon suit, designed to swim and run in. No-one else seems that keen so it is left open. Jimmy cannot understand why Katherine has to pay for it and not Team England. With not a chance to share his exposé about the letter Ives decides to wait for the evening swim.

"She was being really hard on herself when she forgot her toilet roll." Ives reports.

"That is Katherine." Sue says admiringly. "Thankfully never known her to forget anything, unlike, ha ha ha." Sue looked at Jimmy and Ives. In the purgatorial power struggle between Katherine's mind and her OCD clashing, the turbulence has made her lose sight of the bigger picture. In the light of her momentous achievements Katherine cannot see that her perceived biggest darkness is actually the fire of her success. The way she trains has gotten her onto the England team. In her personal life, she is younger than Sue and the others, if she was a typical girl her age they would not be such good friends; Katherine would probably not particularly like them. Katherine is cool and pretty, into all the fashionable clothes and music, the swim-hard mentality is the biggest thing she has in common, that they all have in common with each other. She should not be so hard on herself.

Monday night.

Matt true to his word comes back. All the hugs and handshakes he gets made him believe everybody is glad to see him. Back to his reserved self Matt does not dominate the conversation so Ives got a chance to mention his second letter. Wanting to give it justice they decide to take a look after the swim.

About twenty minutes into the swim. They are in the middle of a pyramid swim, swimming it through IM order. They are up to swimming eight on backstroke. Swimming towards the deep-end for number four Katherine is sure no-one has passed her going down the lane. Rotating for the turn she can see no legs or bodies at the wall. Confused but still about to turn she hears Coach, "Katherine. KATHERINE. You need to get out." Not happy she rights herself to see all their swimmers, including the kids standing on the side.

Once on the side Katherine can see the public too deserting the pool. There are Lifeguards hovering by her swimmers, a suited manager is talking to a Lifeguard as he is pressing the buttons to raise the pool floor. Over the disproportionate and deafeningly painful beeping to signify the pool floor is moving, Katherine hears Ives ask Coach,

"Is it puke or poo?"

"Poo." Coach told him. Jimmy tells Katherine and Ives,

"One of the toddler terrors over there with a parent has crapped. Better than last time when it was vomit. I don't like vom."

Carrying a large aqua-blue plastic ladle with an eight-foot handle as if he is a hero, Garry the Lifeguard (who calls Ives an owl), approaches the nest of Lifeguards. The manager, with his mustard-colour shirt made out of the ugliest cotton, points to the faeces. The button pressing Lifeguard who is causing the rear half of the pool floor to rise has lifted it too far. The floor is dangerously pressing against the long eyelets that the lane-ropes attach to. He eventually hears the whoaing over the beeping to lower it back down four inches. Under close supervision from the manager Lifeguard-Lee, with a bewildered expression, has been passed this ladle and is ladle-fishing for the excrement that has neutral buoyancy. Tired of watching the ineptitude Matt asks,

"Are you getting back in?" Matt has always missed the times when this has happened before. His friends casually nod and say,

"Yes." Reflecting her polluted-apathy Katherine asks,

"Has my eyeliner and mascara ran bad Ives?"

"No it has held up well. New make?" Jimmy backtracks his conversation to Matt's preferable topic,

"Swimming in open-water at the docks, we get immune to swimming in

dodgy water. It is Muirsey water. The fish turd is outnumbered hundred to one by the human finless brown trout species." Matt smiling recalls something,

"I remember one Saturday night, looking for a taxi, me and my friends were walking near the docks you swim in. One poor chap leans over and exhales the longest vomit stream I have ever observed, right down into the way down water." Jimmy does not look happy, "I prefer crap."

Their attention is drawn to Lee with the long ladle. Walking with the restraint of a kid in an 'egg and spoon' race, he is heading to the top of the pool where they are based. The manager hies to get ahead, they pass the floor altering buttons and the manager opens the fire door fully. The bewildered grin has returned to Lee's face as he steps through the door. From where the swimmers are standing they see Lee arch his back with the ladle drawn behind him, with a clumsy movement he slings the scooped faeces into the grass behind the pool. The manager, leaving Lee to close the door over, speaks to Coach. Coach mirroring his swimmers are not looking too impressed. With the nest dispersing as quick as they gathered, over the beeping sound Coach, with infectious cognitive dissonance tells his shoal, "Once the floor had lowered, all the water would have been forced through the filter so will be safe." The younger ones glance at the older group to see if they are prepared to go in. Noticing that, they cannot determine whether to be proud or ashamed of themselves. "Who is going to go first?" Matt enquires. They shrug without concern.

Sue has been by herself since they first had to get out, sitting on the bright orange kayaks stacked near the adjacent deep-end corner. In the quiet gaps they could hear Sue mellifluously singing to herself. It sounded like 'Hearts Blue.' [Todd Hannigan <https://soundcloud.com/toddhannigan/hearts-blue>]. Katherine enlightens them,

"I once seen a swim cap for sale. It was white. On it there was a picture of a toilet. Underneath it said, 'I'd swim lengths anywhere me'. That is SO us, swimming here – I cannot believe they just flung the hard-fart into the grass."

"If the cap fits?" Katherine then Matt's reply makes them laugh. The laughing sounds louder as the beeping stops. Coach gives them a nod

to go into the pool. Still grinning, Katherine took it upon herself to go in first.

Matt is out of the shower and says bye to Ives all in the time it took Ives to fetch the letter out of his bag. He takes it over to the showers. Jimmy and Sue are in there. Sue takes it and reads it whilst Ives asks Jimmy,

"A nice shower or an ice shower today?"

"Best they have been for a while lad. Someone must have accidentally pressed something. Shhhhh."

"Whoop whoop to you! Congratulations! So have they sent you the agreement to sign?"

"No, but I'm thinking it's just going to be a contract, with all terms and conditions. I was hoping you'd have said something about the money, what do you think?"

"It's very good. Why what do you think?"

"Can I have a look?" Jimmy asks. Ives passed the tower of foam the letter still wondering how he can see. Clarifying to Sue and Jimmy, "If you look on it as they are giving us two-hundred pounds of vouchers to give away on each episode. That comes to four thousand pound in total, that's excellent. But there will be four people in the winning team. Divide two-hundred by four, that equals 'was it worth coming?' because they would maybe have paid as much to get here."

"You're exaggerating Ives - Jimmy! You're getting all water in the top!" Jimmy was letting his shower spray down the top of the plastic wallet.

"Arh lad. Sorry Ives."

"It's fine thanks. It'll dry."

"Can see what you mean though." Sue continues. She makes a thinking sound, "Consider if you get someone else to add to it, I doubt Chinyll will say you are not allowed."

"I always wanted to give them a cash prize, well one of those big-ass checks they have on the telly." Listening and as having now read the single page letter Jimmy bellows,

"Matt! Ask Matt to ask his boss in the bank. The bank lad."

"Ask for an extra two-hundred pound for each episode to make four-hundred, that will do you. Have you heard anything else back from the other letters we sent?" Sue enquires.

"No."

"Who'd you send them to." Jimmy needed reminding,
"Speedo, was a no. Well all the manufacturers were a no. Just waiting to hear from shops really. Your diving shop nicely said 'no'. The main thing is though, two-hundred worth of prizes is not bad for the winners, but I wanted little prizes for the runners-up too, and we'll have to hire the pool and there'll be other costs."
"Speak to Matt." Jimmy and Sue agree.
"Thanks, I would have not got any responses if it was not for your help."
"Sorry for getting it wet."
"What is next for us Ives?" Sue is still keeping her role of helping Ives to keep moving.
"Erm, celebrity swimmers." Jimmy virtually shouts,
"Ives and Sue, lad, love; I have gotten on to the fact - the smaller amount of money will help you get celeb-swimmers. That's good."
"How do you mean Jimmy?"
"Well if you seem a minted operation with loads of money and huge prizes - why would a celebrity appear for nothing? But if it is a little community thing like yours they'll see it as helping out like. Us poorer people."
"That's clever Jimmy, thanks. But you know, erm, you know, I sometimes wonder if we, us, are poor or not." Ives says half joking half serious.
"We are poor. Ha ha." Jimmy states with a firm laugh.
"Speak for yourself Jimmy." Sue tells him.
"Even you Sue. I know you have got your gold car, which you are still paying off on tick, until dick-dock; minimum wage and inconsistent hours does not make you rich. There though are poor poorer people than us." Shampoo bubbles come from Jimmy's mouth saying all the Ps. Sue laughs. "There are many people out there earning over ten thousand a week. It is just we don't see them. They have a different way of life so we never physically meet them."
"On that Jimmy-jabber note, I am getting out. Well-done, impoverished Ives. See you outside."
"Thanks, skint Sue." Ives looks at Jimmy to say, "I know what you mean about the celebs and that. It is smart."

Drinking a vending machine coffee, Coach is waiting to say bye to everyone. He will also ride back with Ives.

"I'll just drink this then we will chamele." Sitting at the table Ives does his best impression of a chameleon. Posing his arm slowly, moving his eyes and flicked his tongue out. Coach shakes his head.

"Sorry Coach. I have been hanging around you too long."

"No, you camouflaged the funny well; I did not even see it. Back to normality, Susan apologised. She had to go. She forgot she was picking her Daisy up. – Oh err, she also said to tell you something. She said make it so we are on the first episode and so we have the voucher and prize money to pass as prizes to others."

"Ha ha. That is a really good idea."

"So that means anything to you?" Ives shows Coach the letter. "Well-done. And well-done on your swimming tonight. Your fly is really coming on and when you actually tried on backstroke you were really moving, you came out of the first transition like a spear and kept up your speed. We're going to look more seriously at putting you in IMs. We'll do some more work on your breaststroke kick for that. Well-done."

"I don't want to neglect my fifteen-hundred though."

"Oh no, I know you excel in that, this will help with your fifteen-hundred."

"Cool, thanks Coach."

"Just waiting on Jimmy. Oh whilst I sign out, will you look at my bike please; I've been pulling the brakes and not stopping. If anything when I pull the brakes I speed up."

"Ha ha haha ahaha hahaa. I'll have a look."

"If you're pressing on with you gameshow, were you wanting me to get in touch with Steve Parry?"

"Yes please."

"I'll text him tonight." Ives turned the barrel cable adjusters to tighten the brake cables on Coach's bike. He noticed how badly the wheels are buckled. When Coach comes back he asks, "Oh erm, what do openwater swimmers say when the swim into a wall?" Ives winces ready. "Dam!"

Ives got home to see a text on his phone,

'Sorry I ad 2go n pik Daisy up. An ex of mine called Peter, his Dad is a graphic

designer. He prints signs 4 pastie shops & also the badges for police cars, he wudnt let me av 1 for mine; I cud do with it somedays wen I'm late. Wonder if he'll do ur caps. X'

Ives had no credit so emails his reply instead,

'Hi Sue,

You're full of good ideas tonight. Is that why you finished him, over the police badges? If you don't mind asking him please, if you are on good terms. That us winning the 1st episode was also a brill idea. Thank you. Good night Sue Bru.

Ives :-)'

Sue must have had he computer on as within five minutes his phone made the bird sounds again,

'Ha ha. Av u bin speaking 2 Coach? He said I was a Suburu anite & u a Knight'spear. Wateva that is. How did u find Matt? Xxxx'

'Hi Sue,

Was good seeing him. He wasn't his swimming self, his feet were too high and he was worried about the timing of his breathing. He will get it back in a couple of days though. What do you think?

Ives. '

Ives is glad Sue brought it up as he too had concern for Matt.

'Hope he stays bak. U didn't say anything bout his feet? It's not the same without him. Did he mention anything bout his Sue? I hope tings r goin well for him. X'

Reading this Ives's heart sinks in case he offended Matt.

'Sue, yes, I did mention his feet. Was that an error? I'd want to be told. He is a gentleman, everyone likes and wants him to stay. No he didn't say owt about Sue. Jimmy must have been right about us being poor; must be nice to have so much credit -any summer jobs going in your place OR if you are ever sick for work, can I get dressed in an orange wig and go to your work and keep your wages? I'm sure I could pull-off a good you.
Ives ;-)'

'Where I work don't grow strawberries
farmer Foxtrot. Hair NOT orange, ginger.
Speak zu amz. Gudnite. XXXXX'

Nothing much happened that Tuesday morning and as usual no swim club Tuesday night. Although Coach texted Ives with instructions on how to find and speak to Steve Parry.

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Parrying

"Hi Steve Parry. Good to meet you."

"Are you..."

"Sent by Coach Mint, yes."

"Good to meet you. Mint is a great fella."

"He is. Do you keep in touch?"

"We sometimes text each other jokes, he has a lot. I'll have to come down to see him one day."

"Well this is sort of what I have come to see you about." The man who let Ives into the garage is hanging around. He is wearing chic blue jeans and an intricate white shirt but they both have a small blotch of car-dirt. Steve Parry has overalls on which are in blue, immaculate condition. Ives is slow to start speaking, not yet recovered from his cycle journey; Coach is renowned for having terrible directions, 'It is in Tohunden.' he told Ives. The only relative thing to Tohunden Steve Parry's garage has is an option to travel through Tohunden and then some to get there. Ives left straight from college to get there on his bike. He got in early and spoke to his Physics teacher, one of the twenty percent of teachers in his college that were not bullies. Ives explained why he needed to ride straight to Ungoden and then to be back for training. Mr O'Mally was happy to give Ives the homework he would have handed out in the last ten minutes of the lesson. The teacher was happy how Ives had approached the matter of him leaving fifteen minutes early. One of Ives's best friends in the college says Mr O'Mally and him have an uncannily similar appearance. She says they walk the same. Even before Ives's swimming got into full college knowledge Mr O'Mally has enduringly said that Ives is going to be famous one day.

Ives explained to Steve Parry about the swim meet/gameshow he is arranging for city kids and is endeavouring to get famous swimmers to come along, one a week. The dirty-shirt man listens ardently to Steve speaking,

"Yeah, I cannot see why I can't go to some." The dirty-shirt man scornfully pipes in,

"Well! We will see later." Ives gives the man a defensive puzzled

look. Turns back to Steve who he is beginning to like,
"Are you in touch with anyone else famous who you would think may? Please."

"I am in touch with lots. Rebecca Adlington, David Davies, Sharron Davies, Keri-Anne Payne, Nick Gillingham, Paul Palmer, Ri—" Ives interrupts him,

"I. Erm. Thank you. Well it is mainly who do you think will come. Plus..." Ives continues in a softer tone, "...there will be younger people there, so, err, people who both younger and older ones will know, current, or past swimmers." Dirty-shirt laughs a sneer. Ives tries to not let it bother him. "It is who you think will want to come and is still keeping up their swimming even though they may have officially retired." Dirty-shirt, hisses and shakes his head. Steve Parry does not react, so Ives looks over at dirty-shirt and asserts,

"What?"

"Well apart from disrespecting talented athletes—"

"What, how?"

"Ignorant to who these people are for a start!"

"Wrong! David Davies - a Welsh marathon swimmer. Even seen a swim cap with him on. Keri-Anne the jellyfish eater, another marathon swimmer." Steve Parry laughs at the 'jellyfish eater' he'd never heard that used before. Dirty-shirt hijacks the pause to carry on his rant,

"Well these people who you DO know, you are still disrespecting them saying a bunch of scallys and charvas can hope to beat them."

"Steve, Coach likes you, so do I, if you want to and some of your friends to come, erm, if you and some of your friends want to come to the game, that will be great. I don't know who 'he' is but would we be able sort it without your friend please." Close to Ives's face, Dirty shirt waves his hands up, both in exasperation and aggression. Still talking calmly to Steve, "Your friend who needs to know, I am not a scally; if I was his, face, by now, would be the same shape as that car door over there. But I'm not."

"I think that is his problem." Steve says apologetically, "He's my sort of agent and he does not get recognised as he swam for England, Marty Harris." Ives turns to face Dirty Shirt,

"Hey, no need to be a big baby because I don't know who you are, Marty, that's your fault not mine. Look at me, I'm not like 'ooh you don't know who I am'. Everybody in the world is born with a talent!"

We can't know all billion of them. Or what, you can?"

"I'll tell you what hotshot as Steve's agent, if you beat me - Steve with all his famous friends will come to your poxy little meet. If you lose you will crawl back under whatever disgraceful rock you came." Ives is disappointed that someone who Coach venerates is hanging around with such a horrid man. Ives drops his backpack from his shoulders takes off his tie steps to his right, using all his height, waves his fingers in a facetious stance mimicking Bruce Lee, insolently saying, but in a firm, strong local accent, "Come on then."

"What? I meant at swimming, I'm not fucking fighting you." Marty says with a tremble. Marty has made Steve really uncomfortable; he knows Ives was only being defensively satirical to Marty's browbeating. Dirty-shirt Marty makes eye contact as he tells Steve, "See he is a scally." Ives with his bag picked up replies with a cordial smile,

"Hey, you keep acting scally and you mightn't have a choice about fighting me."

"So are we racing then?" Steve trying to calm the situation down.

"Eglasby pool is the closest." Ives states.

"I'll put your bike in the van." Steve soothingly tells Ives. Marty has marched off into the office with a glass-front switching off lights. "Have you got a kit?"

"Yes thanks. I'm going straight to practice with Coach after."

The bike has been carefully placed and wedged in the back of the van.

"Are you sure about this?" Steve enquires, "I feel like we're kidnapping you." The two of them are sitting in the van, Steve is slowly edging it out, Marty is standing outside leaning on the shutter mechanism.

"Ha ha. Yes it is fine. Weird but..." Marty with a face like a robber's dog opens the passenger door and basically pushes Ives with his hip into the centre of the van. After the Jimmy bluegrass trauma in Wales and now this, Ives is starting not to like vans. Ives continues as if Marty is not in the van, "but it is up to you. You don't have to help out if you don't want to; just because an angry man says you will. That is why it is weird: you are only allowed to help swimmers if me, someone you have never met before, wins a pointless race."

"I like the way you stood up to him." Steve leans forward so Marty can see the rebellious smile on his face. "I'm going to help you out whatever happens. You could do with winning Mart though as he could get the swimmers there you want. He has a lot of sway."

"Okay, what do you think he'll want to race? What was his thing?"

"He was a backstroker."

"That explains everything. Coach says backstrokers are odd." Marty now chimes in,

"I'm testing your skill as a whole swimmer so we race an individual medley, if you know what one of those is."

"So it looks like we are swimming an IM. A four-hundred metre IM?"

Ives is still addressing Steve. Again Marty answers.

"Two-hundred." Ives turns to Marty,

"I thought you said, 'skill as a whole swimmer.' Four-hundred is a good middle distance: testing speed and stamina."

"Four-hundred then." Marty's arrogance has not faded. Steve makes polite conversation to Ives mainly giving names of people including staff he remembers seeing if they are still there; he remembers Gary the Lifeguard bringing an owl into the centre. It is only a ten minute journey.

As Ives is getting his bike out of the van he thinks it is strange how things work out in life, that he had a good IM swim in training and so feels confident in winning. They walk into the turnstile reception together. Ives is in front. He swipes his yellow credit-card size pass and walks through the turnstile. There may have been other swimming pools equally as close, Ives mentioned Eglasby as although the other side of the city outskirts Eglasby is the same council as his Criffud pool, allowing Ives to use his pass leaving the other two to deal with the reception.

Ives glides into the changing rooms and gets changed the fastest he has ever done. He then goes into the toilets to have his ritual pre-swim poo. He is showered and at the deep end before the others. The pool is quite busy, there are lots of kids having lessons in the separate learning pool and a mix of slightly older youngsters, up to teenagers in the quieter main pool. There are also adults, probably parents of the kids getting taught. They need to make a space to race. Ives thought best if he does the space clearing rather than nasty Marty. Ives is good with people, walking back to the shallow-

end, he gives them a charming smile saying,
"Hi my name is Ives. Sorry to be this person but just for three minutes may we please have just this little space please?" Ives gesticulates and area with his voguing arms, drawing his wrists back then straight, "Just for a quick race, then we are getting out. Promise." Ives with his cap, jammers and goggles looks like he belongs there. The people are happy to move out the way, calling their kids over to the other side of the pool. "Can you cheer for me please. That man is a horrible bully. That is how come we had to race, I didn't want to." Ives tells the strangers. The mainly about forty year old quite heavily set women give him a sympathetic look, but one of them says,
"Hey, cheering no! I'm in the race too." She lets out a loud contagious cackle. Ives laughs as the women poses and imitates arm stretches.
"Can you even get to the deep-end Maureen?" The other woman asks her.
"Good luck." She says to Ives, "All that counts is you give it your all kid." The poignant statement jostles Ives,
"Thank you." Ives stands from his squat. Marty looks him up and down, and all of a sudden Marty's arrogance fades.

Swimming is a strange sport. A swimmer's physique bares no correlation to their ability. Swimmers can be chubby yet be champions or be muscle-machines and not win. Ives has the most defined body in his swim club and Marty can see if nothing else Ives has put the swim hours in. Steve diverts his impressed gaze to a now perturbed Marty. Steve is hoping Marty will get an exercise in humility. Ives is really nervous. He is in race mode. With his eyes down, he walks to the top of the pool. They are both going against everything they know, racing without a thorough warm-up. Ives jumps up and down on the spot and rolls his shoulders and head, getting his muscles moderately warm.

"It will be take you marks, set, go." Steve who is dressed but barefoot informs them. Ives feels unconditionally nervous. Normally in his races Ives has his team-mates who he jokes with to alleviate the tension. Alone he stands over the deep-end looking at the black-line in the lane closest to the pool's right side. "GO!" Ives feels

his dive was average. He counts two, breaks his glide dolphins as hard as his back muscles can. More luck than anything he feels his timing to break the surface with an arm stroke was perfect. He cannot see Marty. This surprised Ives as he is not yet confident about his underwater technique. He holds nothing back in the butterfly being aware Marty's specialism, backstroke is next. Ives did not see Marty at the first twenty-five metre turn. Which means that Ives was disciplined and kept his streamlining. They are swimming four lengths of each stroke. Now breaking out of the water, having swam three lengths, on the last butterfly turn Ives sees Marty is nearly a length behind. A brief thought of being glad he chose the longer distance breaks his focussed concentration of what his muscles are doing. To scare his mind into concentrating silence he acknowledges he does not know what the other strokes have in store. He drives to the wall. Takes a huge breath, maybe a technically a tad too late. Ives gets one of best ever transitions and backstroke-underwaters he has ever had. He gloats Marty doing fly would have probably seen it. Attentively Ives places then pulls the water in his hands, powering to the end. On his back kicking as hard as he can he suddenly panics. He realises he'll have to start looking for the wall as there are no flags to mark five metres left. Then Steve's arm comes into view, in lieu of flags he is standing arm out with a yellow noodle (long cylindrical float) in his hand. 'Clever Steve' Ives thinks. Three more strokes on his back, huge breath in and initiate the turn. Giving it is all, saving nothing, he sees Steve jogging back and then reaching out again to mark five metres. Unless Marty has stalked close to him, he knows there are two more turns left to reveal who leading the first half, containing Marty's specialism. Steve is not there to mark the flags for his backstroke to breaststroke transition; as a result, or maybe due to inexperience of the pool, Ives rotated half a metre too early, not wanting to cheat with an extra quarter arm pull, he is forced to glide. Anguished at his half second costing error, he pushes as hard as he can off the wall. Still underwater, he dolphins the allowed one kick, pulls one arm stroke, then the allowed breaststroke kick pushing his arms forward. He breaks the perfect posture to glance up slightly. He sees Marty about to initiate his tumble to leave one length of backstroke to go. Ives's goal to win, suddenly grew to a goal to lap Marty. Although breaststroke is a slower stroke than backstroke, at Ives's first turn he can see he has not lost any

ground to Marty, he may have even gained it. Vacuuming a huge lungful of air he hears Steve cheering him, "GO ON! Keep it up!" Spurred on Ives feels his muscles work. His laterals and his quadriceps. On and on through the water. He is where the flags would be, five metres from the wall about to switch over into the final four to swim frontcrawl. Marty is about to turn, with still another two breaststroke left. Ives hopes if he keeps up the effort by his first freestyle turn he'd have lapped Marty.

He had caught Marty by the Lifeguard's chair, halfway down the pool. Ives did not let up. His instinct told him he could come close to lapping Marty for the second time. Marty was basically walloping in the water. In Marty's clamorous mind, that has more energy now than his body, he is bitterly-blaming trying to keep up with Ives on the butterfly and agreeing to swim four-hundred-metres as opposed to two-hundred.

Marty got to the start of his frontcrawl section five metres ahead of Ives getting to the finish of his race. Ives did try and try, treating the frontcrawl as a sprint, he finished gasping for breath, to Steve grabbing his swim-capped head near his ears in both hands shaking it in discomposed revelry, "You leviathan monster!"

To give Marty his due, lonely but gallantly he completed the race, even though he had to circumvent some public who had been enlightened the race was, in effect, over by Steve's previous booming celebrations. Ives said nothing, smiled through his breathlessness, climbed out and drank from the stainless steel water-bottle he had left near the start.

He was happy to hazily thank the public as he walked on by. Some of them sportively clapped. The total effort drained Ives of any shielding and due to all the previous hostility Ives was already unexpectedly emotional. The clapping made him lower his head in case a meaningless tear slunk out. One of the clapping women said, "Now eff off from bogarting our pool and get yourself to the Olympic's pool." Ives smiled.

From the other side of the pool to Ives, Steve consolidated his

image of a good guy: Ives, whilst rinsing himself in the open-showers, watched Steve help his friend at the finish. Not hanging around as he needed to get to his club, Ives goes to his locker and empties it into his cubicle, the same colours and set out as Criffud, only newer and artfully smaller. Inside his cubicle about to lock it,

"Well-done." Steve states again from a decreasing distance. "I should have timed it." Ives fully opens his door.

"Thanks. You're a good guy."

"And you are a warrior. You'll go as far as you want." He pauses to let it sink in. "Well King Arthur, I can give you a lift to practice if you want."

"No thanks, but thanks for the offer. I could do with a cool down on the bike."

"Are you sure?" Steve emphasised the 'sure'. "Surprised you are not dead on your feet." Ives keeps quiet as he sees Marty approaching. Marty puts his hand out very early. When he is closer Ives meets it and they shake.

"I think I hate you even more." Marty says through laughter. Ives looks to the floor. "Get Steve the list of people you want and I'll make it happen for you."

"Thank you."

"Are you having a lift off me and Steve?"

"No thanks." Marty looked at Steve. Steve facially expresses 'it is alright.' so Marty shakes Ives's hand again and firmly states,

"See you again." Steve nods at Ives to say bye. Ives asks him,

"So I'll get Coach to text you the list?"

"Smashing." then Steve nods again. Walking off as Ives closes his cubicle he hears Steve continue, "Ha ha, he even got ground on the backstroke. How did you ever get medals? Ha ha." Ives could not quite hear Marty's response; it did have the descant of some sort of expletive protest.

Ives got to Wednesday night's swim practice on time. Coach was horrified at the events Ives described. Ives defended Steve Parry's part in it all. In the showers at the end Sue says,

"Outside we'll write a list—" Katherine passes them on her way to disappear, interrupting Sue, laughingly shouting to Ives without breaking her stride,

"Make your face the same shape as that door! I love it."

"You're one of the gentlest people I know, how'd you nearly end up in fights?" Sue enquires. Ives nods his head to show his bewilderment.

"I don't want to stab your bubble lad but do you reckon he'll be able to get all that he promised? He seems like one of those cock-heads." Jimmy wonders. Ives nods his head to fully agree.

"Well..." Sue sounds like she is about to come up with another one of her excellent ideas. "Consider doing our own list. There is no reason why it cannot begin as a fantasy list. Sending the letters themselves we have nothing to lose. We will also give a copy to Nasty Pastie Marty and at the worst the celebs get two invitations."

"Sounds good. Fantasy list hey?"

"Look. You've sent him off on two sheets to the wind now Sue. Sort it out. Sue, he should stick to the real world." Jimmy vehemently complains.

"Stephanie Rice is on top of the list. I will send the letters off. Thanks Sue. So it is real and I think so is my love. Ha ha ha Jimmy."

"Think she's married." Sue tells him.

"No. This is fantasy! Plus that may all be a ruse until she gets to meet me." Jimmy frowns, his eyes like two pee holes in the snow.

"Understand where he is coming from Jimmy; I'm not sapphic, but she'd also be on my list, she is so gods-dam radiant. When I was little I was watching daily on Youtube to copy her swimming. I wanted to be exactly like her."

"And every time you see her she has a huge full of life grin on her face. Who else would be on your list Sue?"

"Aside from the usual Phelps and Lochte and Mark Foster, erm, Yannick Agnel."

"Is he the one who looks like Doctor Who." Jimmy wonders.

"Dr NO-way. Not at all. He does not look like him, but yeah that is who I mean." Jimmy shocks Ives and Sue saying,

"If I was a woman he'd be on my list." Sue does not react. She can see Ives looking dumbfounded so asks him,

"Who'd be on your list if you were a woman then Ives?"

"That's the thing, I don't know if a man is ugly or not, to me men are just like objects, things that move. For all I know Jimmy here is as fit as a Roman God or as pugly as a turd dangling from a dog's bottom." Sue laughs.

"What are you saying here like?" Jimmy commands. Ives with a high

inflection tells him,

"Maybe men who see men as attractive - a little gay?" Jimmy who normally has a rebuttal for everything confidently keeps quiet. Sue then responds,

"So what you are saying is that you are super-straight?"

"Must be. Ha ha."

"If all that is true," Sue makes sure Jimmy is listening, "it is so weird as if had to guess any of you was gay I'd guess you Ives..."

Jimmy laughs. "...There is just something feminine about you." Sue pauses to think, "Last week when you spent the whole of the pyramid rests talking to Katherine over the prom dress she has ordered. Gabbing over what cut the leg is and saying words I haven't heard of. Ruching. There is something about your hands how you move them." Ives is pulling a face.

"Well in his defence Sue love, the hand thing is just because they are so big."

"Thanks Jimmy." Jimmy continues,

"As for you and the dress and the strop-with-a-mop talks, you are guilty as charged. Ha ha. Ha ha."

"The weather has been okay this week." They all laugh at Ives changing the conversation.

In the tabled viewing area, where Coach waits, they quickly draw up a list of celebrities they know. Sue suggested that Para-Olympians may also fancy coming. Ives is grateful to all of Sue's ideas. It did not take Ives long that night to type the letters. He used the same template for them all, only needing to change key facts.

EXAMPLE OF THE LETTER IVES SENT OUT TO THE CELEBRITY SWIMMERS,

Ives Knight
28 Marmus Way
Lehane
Arkwell
AW24 1UJ

Hello Markus Rogan,

Our swim club has set up a season of swim meets to recognise the unnoticed swimming ability and effort of kids and adults amongst inner-city swim clubs up and down the country.

The event takes the form of a gameshow; based on fun, but serious about the swimming. For an example of a fun round, depending on how many questions the team got wrong a swimmer will swim 100 metres backstroke with lots of pull buoys in their lane.

Each week the winning team of four, three open age and one under twelve, will get to race a celebrity swimmer. The race will be 100m. The guest star will swim 100m IM. The winning team will swim 100m team medley, with a head start they have earned during the earlier question rounds. The head start will be in average range of six to fifteen seconds.

We will ask a different celebrity swimmer each week. In the middle of the hour long contest the star swimmer could tell the contestants a few simple tips for swimming and training.

We have put you on the top of the list as we think you will be the most inspirational. Aside from the success in Olympics and world records in different disciplines you have such a unique and clever outlook on swimming. Your huge personality will inspire swimmers for years to come.

The competitions will run from September to November most of them will be on weekends, but a few on week nights. If you would like to come, you find it will be fun. An online shop will give us vouchers for the winning team. That is all the funds we have, so it is voluntary for us and will be for the celebrities that come. We will take lots of photographs and even film the events so any sponsor of yours will have excellent publicity.

If you would like to come at any point we will be delighted. Please let us know so we can send you further details. Also if you would like any more information before you commit please ask us.

Everybody involved is excitedly waiting for your response,

Many regards,

Ives Knight.

After typing the letter, about to switch his computer off Ives sees he has an email,

Hi Ives,

I did not want to say any of this after practice in case anyone heard. I am still not feeling any better about swimming. Still not put my finger on what is getting me down I think I maybe closer,,,,

I know we are all in the same boat but I'm getting home so down and comfort eating. It is all the non-swimmers in our lane. Don't get me wrong they are all lovely people but they are getting in the way and me down. Coach seems absorbed with the kids, which is understandable, I'd hope I'd be the same if I had his job. This is no reflection on you or Catwalk or Jimmy or Matt. I love you all and your company both in the water and out. Also the pool is, what's the word you use, dilapidated and dirty, (except when Paul is on he is really nice, he makes it into a clean dilapidated.) I'm thinking about changing clubs. Kovenes.

I feel tearful even thinking about it though. ??????????????????????

Love Sue.

Ives is tired. He cannot ignore this pivotal email. He goes into the bathroom puts toothpaste on his brush and goes back to his laptop brushing his teeth whilst typing.

Sue!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

I would really miss you if you went. My stomach is upset from reading your email. And now too thinking about it. We will have to talk about this. I wonder if this is what Matt

has been going through, have a talk to him too.

You shouldn't feel bad about what you are saying though. I have also been frustrated by the others in the lane. They are really nice pleasant people and so were the people before them. It is parents who come for a month because their kids are swimming in the kids' lane and because they swam when they were younger they have the idea 'what the hell, I'll join in too'. People whose goggles are bigger than their abs. They cannot cope. Taking a quote from a famous Picard sci-fi speech (know it is not your thing). We are sacrificing our swimming, our aspirations. We have made too many compromises already.

They invade our lane. We are nice to them.

They mess up our sets. We slow down.

They ruin our training. We take care not to swim too close.

They sneer at our dreams. We coach them.

Then they just stop coming. Soon to be replaced, different faces same nuisance.

Well not again, the line must be drawn here, this far no further.

Now you have mentioned it, I think the need to do something is brewing in me too, sadly.

People I can remember, two female swimmers from Coach's school late forties came together and allegedly ex-England swimmers. Would push off in front of us, then swim really slow.

Damon, the large Irish guy, always getting in the way especially drifting into the centre of the lane.

Some other man a supposedly triathlete, a tortoise, cannot even remember his name as he was only there for two weeks.

Fast forward a year, Dave has stopped (I hope he does come back, he was just starting to get better and, like them all, a really nice guy, I honestly would like to see him back).

Stewart the Lifeguard has stopped. Helen - lovely woman, how long will she stay?

I'm not against new people, not at all; Lee fitted in well as he can swim. Not even

against all these people who have messed up our nights, I just wish it was for a reason and that they stay! Or they go in a slower lane until they can swim three lengths without the lead swimmers having to attempt to get by them. Feel horrible saying that though.

Catwalk may have the right idea. Either she swears and shouts at them and or she just swims basically on top of them not caring if she hits them or on coming swimmers. You care and so do I. Me, the size of me, I'd just feel a bully pushing my weight around. Sometimes wish I was more like Katherine.

I think I know which night it was that was the worst for you. I also seen your face when Zoe was going on and on about how good Katherine was, probably because Catwalk was barging past her. And muggins me and you stuck behind her but in front of slow-Mark. Zoe was probably thinking we were struggling. Her comments rubbing salt in the damage she has caused. But she still went on and on about it. I did not want to say too much on that night but I agree with what you were saying about slow-Mark. He does just push off right in front of us, he should let us go by then push off, it is basic pool etiquette. Sometimes I feel we are forced to choose, we either let them ruin our training or we can either turn into rampaging bulldozers (is it mean saying like Katherine?). I have never thought of swapping clubs. On bad nights I just try to laugh and tell myself Sun Yang hired them to ruin our training. Seriously though, we need someone to help us.

Is it just people getting in your way ruining your training or is there something else that has brought this on?

Don't want to give you more bad tidings, but Thursday as it is that bit quieter has normally been a peaceful unbusy sanctuary. No longer! Slow-Mark was saying he might come (and so did Catwalk).

Sue, I feel sad. I feel terrible and mean on you, I should be helping you but I am

agreeing with what you are saying and adding fire to it ----- sorry. We need
HELP!!!!!!!!!! From someone.

Lots of love,

Ives.

By the time Ives spits out the burning toothpaste into the sink and
returns to switch off his laptop there is a reply,

Hi

Thank you for the essay! Blimey!!!!!! I'll have a proper read later, but don't be daft. I'm
thankful you agree. We definitely need to meet up and talk about. I'll let you know when,

Good night Ives Jives XXXXXXXXXXXX

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Kovenes and Goodies

The following week Sue never committed to a date for her and Ives to meet up and chat. In practice she was still feeling the same, although they got some sort of abatement as slow-Mark was going on holiday for a fortnight and Zoe missed a few. After that however at the next Monday night's practice, Ives is stood at the table ready to leave minding Coach's hat whilst he is in the office signing out, "Ives, tomorrow night... Wait, what food are you eating?"

"They're nice Sue. Dried banana and apricots. Got a bag from kind Catwalk. — Here."

"Nom-nom."

"Nom nom nom!"

"What I was going to say is, tomorrow night... Can I keep these?"

"No. MY nom nom. — Okay, you can have half."

"Right, TOMORROW-night going to Kovenes swim club. Do want to come?"

"Tomorrow. Err..."

"Going at the moment to see what it's like. If it is a washout that is fine, no more considering. Bit scared though: never been to another swim club. Really appreciate it if you came with me. Please, please Ivesy Wivesy."

"Okay. What, what about Coach though?"

"Coach is cool. We are going once, for now, one night when OUR practice is not on."

"Where is it?"

"Sorry what?" Sue could not understand Ives.

"Where is it?"

"We've swum in the pool a long time ago, it is called Kingsway Road."

"Oh I know."

"The growed-ups are nine to ten."

"Nine to ten! Bloody hell Sue, I am lapping Sun Yang with my eyes closed and dating Stephanie Rice by then."

"Ha ha me too. Having a power-nap beforehand. Do you want picking up?"

"Err, Kovenes it's about six miles. To be honest think I'd feel even more sleepy if I went in a car. Do you mind if I cycle and meet you

outside?"

"That's fine. Could bring Daisy that way. It costs four pounds."

"Four pounds! Bloody hell Sue! Ha ha ha. How do you know all this?"

"Speaking to Lindsey. Lane-Lindsey. She is nice. That was her club."

"So we are just meeting outside at what time?"

"Half eight."

"Half eight. That's honestly my bed time Sue. We'll be okay won't we? The lateness won't make us swim bad?"

"We won't swim bad, but be prepared, there is supposed to be lots of nationals there and everyone else is county. There are some dry-wrinkles there too, in their eighties, who were good at their day and still going quick. It is all laned. Told there are five lanes, all speeded. So if there are mostly nationals we won't be the Princes and Princess of the Pool, or in the top lane, YET! I really want you to come."

"Suppose it will help with our swimming. I'll see you tomorrow morning though?"

"Yeah, it just in case we don't get chance to finalise it. Thanks Ives. Appreciate it."

"Half eight."

Ives arrives more or less spot on to half eight. Sue is not there yet. The bike ride was fine for Ives. Ives is one of those tall and thin gangly people, he should really be cycling not swimming; his cycle-shorts reveal his chicken legs. Ives is feeling nervous. He can see why Sue wanted moral support. The pool exterior looks old, dark and gloomy. A typical ugly brown 1980's building. The entrance to the inside of the building is a random hard to find foyer to the right, no more lit up than any other part of it. The smell of an unfamiliar pool's chlorine acts as one of Pavlov's bells, which Ives associates with racing and nerves. He paces up and down waiting. It has now well passed twenty-five to nine. With five pounds credit Ives's phone is having its third trip out of the house this year. Ives texts Sue,

"Sue, unless ur nearby is it cool if I go in & get changed? I'm desperate for a poo. I'll wait 40 outside the changies. I won't go in

without u."

Ives gave Sue a minute to reply whilst he fished out his money. No response so he heads to the receptionist sitting behind a white high beam. There is another woman two seconds ahead of him, she is about forty. He feels he is nervously shaking a bit. He hears the woman say,

"Swim club please." The receptionist types some things on her till. Without being prejudiced Ives was quite relieved as this woman was, on the plump side of life. He guiltily thinks, 'At least me and Sue won't be the slowest there. Then again she may surprise us.' After the receptionist tells the woman,

"Four pounds please." And starts to fumble with coloured wristbands the woman says,

"This is my first time, could you tell me where it is please." The receptionist gives her some fuzzy directions. Whilst getting her receipt Ives, delighted, says to the woman,

"That's what I'm here for and it is my first time too." The woman, quite abruptly looking him up and down says,
"What?"

"It's my first time too, I'm a bit nervous." The woman brusquely slightly nods her head pulling a snubbing face, gets her receipt and luminous-blue band, turns and goes through the turnstile without saying another word. Ives has relatives in Kovenes and is well-aware that they are not generally rude. He smiles it off and says to the receptionist,

"Err, swim club as well please." He pays his four pounds, gets his blue paper wrist band, looks around for Sue, no sign of her so he too goes through the turnstile.

Heading a short four metres into the building there is the choice of an ascending wide stair case in-front or corridors to the right. He seems to remember to turn right. Standing there is the rude woman speaking to a female Lifeguard. Ives hears the Lifeguard shout to another Lifeguard, a male one coming down the stairs,

"Can you show this lady to the slimming club please." He walked passed them with his head down feeling mortified that this woman must have been thought Ives was being nasty and mocking her. That took his mind off his nerves.

He gets changed. Kovenes pool is much older than Criffud. Although being older it is apparent that the Lifeguards try their best to keep on top of it and keep it clean; the unappealing old-fashioned small floor tiles must not make it easy. Getting changed Ives has now noticed one benefit of Criffud. In mid-stand after taking his shoes off, raising his head to see the whole of a man's bottom, a chubby-ish man bending over revealing more than any un-consenting person should be forced to see. Now prepared that nudity must be in vogue here, from previous encounters in other pools Ives remembers to keep his eyes pointing to the suddenly rather appealing patina on the floor tiles.

Changed with no more disturbing eyefuls, he heads to have his ritual poo. The toilet-floor is equally as wet as all parts of the male changing room floor, although probably cleaning and pool water, it still is not pleasant to walk upon. Quickly pooped and showered he walks out onto the poolside. Sue is standing there with her bottle and luminous-yellow wristband. They smile and give each other a big hug. They tell each other that they are nervous. Sue had not brought Daisy.

They hover, cold, in the group of a about fifteen, whilst the Coach tells them the warm up. They immediately notice a difference between clubs this Coach talks in metres their Coach talks in number of lengths. Probably due to Coach Mint's preponderance of children's lessons. The Coach seems nice. When the other swimmers get in the water divided between the five lanes, Sue and Ives approach him and tells them they are new. Asking them,

"Are you okay at swimming?"

"Yes thanks. I'd say we are average really." Ives tells him not sure what to say. The Coach tells them to,

"Go into the second lane and just to do five-hundred metres frontcrawl warm-up." Aka twenty lengths.

They can see it is the second slowest lane. Ives dives in first, then Sue. By the time they dove and glided they had already caught one of the four in the lane. Ives turns onto his back, looks at Sue who is doing a breaststroke meander. Ives does the same, letting the slow person gain a few metres then swims frontcrawl slowly. They wait at the wall, letting the man get a third of the way up the

pool. Not wanting to wait too long as another swimmer was approaching. They swim up the lane. Breaststroke meandering from before the flags the Coach tells them to move into the next lane. Glad. But still ambitiously wanting to be in the top lane. They go under the ropes, to basically do the exact same thing as in the previous lane. Getting back the the deep-end this time the pair look up to see the Coach, who again smiling moves them up one more lane which is second fastest lane.

Sue and Ives stop their warm-up when the others finish theirs. These top two lanes are swimming the same sets as each other. The other lanes have a wide range of shapes and ages. The seven in these two lanes are two males about thirty, seem to have been swimming all their lives; someone else called Sue who is a thirty odd year old woman; two chummy lads early twenties one resembling a young version of Steve O from Jackass; and two girls again about early twenties. The only two without national caps are the man like Steve O and one of the thirty-year old men. Who are both capless. The woman who introduced herself as Sue, heads under the rope into the first lane saying,

"These two lanes are the same speeds so I may as well go in this lane so you two can stay together." That being said, for pride Ives would still prefer to be in the top lane with his Sue. He noticed the two youngest girls are in the first lane. With 'Steve O look a like' who he thinks is Kovenes's best swimmer.

They swam Coynus Cads proud despite the format of the instructions being different to what they are accustomed to especially how they would describe what times to work off for the swims. Sue and Ives did not get chance to swim to their full potential as they were last in the lane and so getting slightly held up by swimmers in front. To counteract this they waited and let the people in front get ahead. Neither Sue nor Ives felt bold enough to ask to lead the lane. Although that would have shown the others what they were capable of. The main reason why is that they were still not totally grasping the instructions.

No warmer and tired Ives and Sue commend each other's performance; they were both equally surprised how well they compared to these national swimmers. Most of them are hanging around outside waiting

for each other, whilst the staff hastily go through the normal operating procedures to shut the building. Sue and Ives say a polite 'bye' as they pass the group but keep themselves to themselves. Ives and Sue quickly hug each other and head their separate ways home.

In the ensuing week Ives got all different things delivered by his postman, who Ives happens to think does not like him.

His favourite was the confirmations he got. His second favourite was what Stephanie Rice sent, handwritten.

Hi Les and all your friends,

Thank you for asking me to come to your competition. It sounds like you are doing a wonderful thing for your community. Even though my schedule is so busy (I thought my life would have become less hectic after my retirement from professional swimming — not so!!!). I would love to swim in your competition, the only thing stopping me is the huge distance, like the other side of the world. I have not even got any plans to go to Europe in the near future. I have always enjoyed my time in the UK. Arkwell is on my to-do list!

I wish you all well in your endeavour. I know you will have lots of fun!

I have sent you lots of goodies to hopefully help you for prizes. Make sure to keep some for yourselves Les!!!

Send me some pictures of the events.

If I am ever near the UK you never know,

Lots of love Steph Rice!!! ♥

Ives got the parcel from Stephanie Rice the Saturday after he and Sue went to swim in Kovenes. He'd already had some others letters but he was saving them up to take them all in at once. Not the Stephanie Rice letter though. Monday morning the whole contents of Stephanie Rice's parcel are taken poolside for them to look at before they swim,

"How's the lemno today?" Jimmy asks. They are all crowded around the deep-end waiting for Coach. Sue sticks a testing foot in the water, "Ooh, NO! No, sorry Jimmy. It looks clean though." ""Paul."" Sue and Ives say in unison. "What is that you've got Ives?" Ives passes it to Jimmy who holds everyone's, even the youngest child swimmers', attention. His head high to read it out loud,

"Wow. It is off Stephanie Rice." Jimmy states then pauses to read. Sue whispers to Matt,

"Ives is in love with her." Jimmy's posture shrinks,

"She says, she cannot come. Sorry Ives." Katherine initiates a group,

"Arrrrr" They surround Ives and mockingly hug him all at once.

"Hard luck buddy." Matt tries to be sympathetic. Loudly Ives says so all can hear,

"Thanks but it is okay. Look what she has sent for us and to use as prizes." Ives points to the A4 size brown box and waves his fingers nodding at Jimmy to tell him to pass the contents around.

The kids and everybody are impressed at the contents: NSW swimcaps, Australian Team swimcaps, Sun Rice (a previous sponsor of hers) swimcaps and photographs, all signed. Two pair of new goggles signed on the boxes, a dozen or so Speedo branded cheer-sticks, many stickers of herself and other Australian swimmers and Olympic swimming theme rub-on tattoos such as the Olympic rings. Ives felt compelled to ask Sue to share out the stickers and tattoos to the kids all of which had been politely listening. He would have liked to have given them more. The kids were made-up.

Noticing Coach they respectfully put the remainder of the items back in the crumpled box.

"Forgotten my fins." Sue randomly blurbs out as Ives puts the envelope on the sandstone window-ledge to keep it dry, whilst he heard Coach say,

"I miss conversations that don't start with, 'Yes Coach I have all

my gear.'" Matt was about to say something to Coach, but decides not to. "Twelve-twelve-twelve please."

"I'm bringing all the letters, including the ones from the swim stars that are coming, on Thursday night if anyone wants to get to the tables for seven." Ives loudly churns out as if he was trying to set the record for fastest speaking. No-one could respond as they were all about to dive in.

After the twelve-twelve-twelve warm-up, whilst her friends are in their own world noisily talking, Katherine panting and coughing makes eye contact with an equally exhausted looking stubbly faced man on the other-side of the lane ropes. He has struggled to swim ten lengths in twenty minutes. He smiles at them both hanging off the wall gasping for their breath. Katherine smiles back. Easing his cough the man swigs from a can out of a small white plastic bag he had placed poolside in reaching distance. Still making friendly eye contact he palliatively smiles and offers the wrapped can to Katherine who is still clearing her throat. Katherine can see it is a black can of special-brew inside. She gently smiles with a delicate shake of her head and then pushes off behind her friends for the first set of butterfly.

That Monday night in her brown boots and black jacket, Sue again convinces Ives to go back to Kovenes tomorrow (Tuesday) night. Sue was insistent that she picks Ives up as she wanted to chat to him.

The second Kovenes swim goes well. There were less people in that week. Sue and Ives are in the lane to the far right, the lane Ives was wanting to be in last week. They even get asked to lead the lane on the simpler kick set. Which Ives done, with Sue second. Sue understands the next set better than Ives so she leads with Ives second and Kevin third. Their accents brandish they are not from Kovenes; Kevin's enquiries leads to them finding out he only lives around the corner from Ives. He kindly offers Sue and Ives a lift if they ever need it. Sue and Ives cannot remember the man's name who is going fourth and last. He is about forty-five has a goatee, but had obviously shaven every other part of his body including his legs, God has shaved his head. Sue and Ives between them stay leading the lane for the rest of the night. They are proud of

themselves. Albeit they would have preferred to have achieved this when the national swimmers were there, they both think they could have held their own.

In the car on the way home, after Sue pops into the Tesco garage behind the sports centre and buys some chocolate and oranges. It is a big bar but she only eats two small pieces, which she feels guilty about. Ives peels the orange for her whilst she is driving. After Ives has asked about her Steve as he gets on with Steve and would enjoy seeing him more often, Sue brings up swimming other nights in Kovenes, Ives retorts,

"You didn't ever answer a small question I snuck in that email. I was wondering if it's only people getting in the way that is putting you off; or is there something else as well?"

"Not sure Ives. That is why did not answer that question in the email. I was not ignoring you. Been constantly debating myself over it. The best answer can come up with is the sameness. Similar warm-ups. Similar sets. Not a dig at Coach. He does a fantastic job especially considering he is also simultaneously coaching five year olds, all by himself, he deserves a medal." Ives punctuates Sue with,

"A gold one, with thin mint-green, yellow and pink stripes." Sue thinks Ives needs a girlfriend to teach him things he should not say.

"Could also be the sameness of the centre itself. Always seem out to get us. This is no reflection on you, Matt or Jimmy. Really like all of you to come with me."

"IF! You go."

"Yeah to come with me if I go." Ives laughs, realising Sue has all but made up her mind.

"Sue, I totally understand where you are coming from, I agree. All I can think of is how much I will miss you, or miss Coach and anyone who stays or doesn't if I don't. Haha. Shall I say that better?"

"Got you. Not trying to force your hand Ives. There is a tune to the plan: Kovenes don't swim in the mornings. Whichever way you all sway, I'll still be seeing everyone in the mornings and Thursdays nights."

"Whose training plan would, would we follow? And, wouldn't Coach think we are being disloyal?" Sue swings her car inwards coming to a stop. They are outside Ives's home.

"We'll follow both, Ives-Wyn."

"Sue, erm, you've had longer to think about this than me, I just so-don't know; I'll run it as a background process over the next few days. If you do, when will you?"

"Will wait for you to let your Solero cool."

"How come you haven't asked Matt or Jimmy? Matt lives in Kovenes."

"Not sure. There is a song of reason there somewhere? We can't all leave at once. Ha ha. Coach will think it is something he said."

"One of his jokes! Ha ha. I'll think Sue. Good swimming tonight."

"Good swimming Ives."

"Ta for the lift Sue Pa."

"Good night."

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Making Space

This is the most excited everyone has been over his gameshow. Everyone is squeezing around the list placed on the table after swimming. Only Matt was early enough to see it at seven. He has gone home now.

Confirmations.

People coming,

Steve Parry

Smiley Miley

Mark Foster (maybe thanks to Marty)

Rebecca Adlington (maybe thanks to Marty)

Markus Rogan

David Davies

Rob Bale

Ross Davenport

Michael Jamieson

Ievan Lloyd

Aimee Willmott

Joanne Jackson

Michael Rock (from Arkwell)

Inbetween

Ian Thorpe

Duncan Goodhew.

Para

Jessica-Jane Applegate

Rhiannon Henry

Robert Welbourn

Matthew Walker

Craig Rodgie

Well known Not coming

Michael Phelps -Sent some signed photos.

Ryan Lochte -Sent some signed photos.

Stephanie Rice -Sent lots of goodies.

Sue finished looking at the list first.

"Sue? – Lovely, beautiful, clever, kind and helpful, they all want to know what dates to come on as some can only make certain days. Are you still okay to organise all that?"

"Are you broken? Never agreed to that. Ha ha hee. Are you still okay to sit on the bottom of the pool for ten minutes, then we'll talk." Ives loudly laughs.

"It is all too hard and complicated for me and you are so big and clever."

"Yeah thanks I am clever, clever enough to tell you a big fat no."

Sue was smiling as she said it. "Bring the list tomorrow and we, WE, arhmmn hem, WE! Will look through it. I hope you know you owe me?"

"I don't know much, but I know I love you and that maybe all I need to know." With a high falsetto voice Ives trying to sound like Aaron Neville [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNX1JLRSiyg> Don't Know Much. Linda Ronstadt and Aaron Neville]. Jimmy joins in,

"So many questions still left unanswered." Ives has stopped: he does not know any more words so Coach joins Jimmy,

"So much I've never broken through." Sue thinks the best way to make them stop is to leave with a playful huff. Jimmy changes the song for a solo,

"Sue I love you so. I want you to know. That I'm going to miss your love the minute you walk out the pool. Please don't go, don't go, o-o-ho. Don't go away." [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YIAAnkrPgTvY> Double You- Please Don't Go.] Everybody including Coach stands up complaining, Coach jokes,

"And on that NOTE, I'm going." Before Ives leaves, Jimmy sensibly says to Ives,

"When you are organising your list lad, have the local celebs unscheduled and as a backup. The likes of Steve Parry and that. So if any of them pull a sick-note in the last minute you can call him."

"Thanks Jimmy. That's really clever. I don't mind sacking Sue and..."

"Ha ha. I will in me hat lad."

Since he got more and more letters the stress was getting to Ives in

organising Olympic athletes telling them when to come. Some can only come on certain days. Some are even travelling from different countries. One says he'll come on a day when he is travelling from Wales to visit his family in Scotland. Ives is overwhelmed. He hasn't even spoken to the pool managers or got the website started. He has bought the domain names though; Swimseye and Swimquisition, and registered them as trademarks with the graphics Katherine created. His answer for now is to ignore everything.

Matt, Sue and Ives are all at the pool very early the next morning waiting inside sitting at the tables. One of the managers lets them in when he arrives and then shuts the door behind themselves locking out everyone else. Ives is doing his best to keep the topic trivial. Sue to putting off going through the list,

"Don't like to ask Matt, but how are things with your Sue?" Matt smiles a big grin, pauses then says,

"Good thanks. I'm minding her parrot at the minute, it is an african grey. It is a funny old thing. It knows lots of words, which is not unusual but this one also knows when to use them. It only says 'good morning' in the morning when I go downstairs. When anyone is angry it starts swearing, shouting 'eff-off' and 'ba'" Matt softly whispers the, "stard". "Sometimes I forget it is not a person. It can perceive what mood anyone is in and tries to cheer people up. Sue's excuse for the parrot swearing is that it is second hand."

"Can you bring it one day? Pleeeeease!"

"I would love to buddy, but we have no precedent how it will react. I am not going to be in Sue's good books if it dies of shock, or absconds and takes up residence upon the beams over the pool as our permanent mascot."

"Is it grey?" Sue wonders.

"Yes, although in several lighting conditions it has a blue tint too. It has a vivid red stripe on the end of its tail. Here I have got some pictures on my phone. – Better yet, here is a video of it talking."

"Me and Sue and Jimmy and Katherine will have to come to yours to see it. Are you certain you cannot bring it?"

"Yes you are always welcome. And no, haha, no to bringing the parrot here."

"Arr, imagine what she would get it back saying." Ives smiling as he starts to think about what he has postulated. Sue beats him to it,

"'Wait, what are we doing?' 'How many have we done?' 'DON'T TOUCH MY FEET!' 'Coach I've forgot my..'" They are all laughing. Ives's input,

"Sorry did I just touch your erm?" That did not inflame the laughter, Sue augments,

"'Who's going first?' 'Blue top.' 'Red top.' 'COACH COACH COACH!'"

"Sue would not be happy." Ives tries again,

"'It is cold and it tastes funny!' 'What food have you got?'"

"It already says them buddy."

"Okay, what about, 'How's my make up?'"

"Yep."

"'Are you wearing drag?'"

"Yes." Matt fending off his laughter. Sue finishes the theme off with,

"'Twelve-twelve-twelve.'" After a respite, "For your list Ives. Approach it as you would a game of sudoku. I know you are good at things like that, you are a bit sci-fi geeky." Ives is already unresponsive in a world of his own. After a delay,

"Sudoku sci-fi? But... YES like sudoku, so not to work out what it can be but work out what it cannot be. THEN, for the initial list on each day, or better for each person attach a little algorithm of what to do in case they cancel. Thanks Sue."

"Yeah that is exactly what I was thinking." Sue's manner making no effort to uphold the whopper.

"Can I say well-done buddy for getting all this organised and for even devising the concept. Due to you we are going to have celebrities and other swim clubs coming to our pool."

"Thanks Matt. Well that is when I get around to asking the pool can we have it here." Matt grins,

"That is the lackadaisical Ives I know. Good to see you have not totally gone."

"Really though, it is not me, most of what I have done has been under primrose-Sue over there's guidance. Catwalk has helped with her honesty and logo. Jimmy has come up with some brilliant ideas and support, so has Coach and so have you. Also I did not manage to get the television people involved after all of you chipped in. It is all of you showing faith in me has been the biggest help."

"That reminds me, the boss still has not got back to me over your 'big-ass' checks and money. I will ask him again today. If he is in a good mood. It has probably worked out for the best, people seem

happier when it is sunny. Do not dwell on that TV thing buddy for now, it will turn around, remember what you quoted to me after I had added on my hundred metres in that meet in Preston buddy? You said, 'failure is stair we have to go up to get to success. That I had to try and fail with different approaches to my swimming to find out what works. And the crux was, 'if we get to where we are going without any of these fails, then we are no higher than we started.' Remember? Same goes for you son. That advice has also helped in my career." Ives is embarrassed. Sue can see that. She had been listening intently so speaks to take the attention away from Ives, "Thankfully swimming is so good for people. It teaches of life. How to deal with hitches when things aren't going to plan, but also how to act when things do and stay humble and focused." Sue's deep insight struck a chord deep inside them all.

"With swimming, there has been a downside in my job." Matt seriously informs his two friends. "If I am ever stooped down in work I narrowly avert getting to the point-of-no-return in a racing dive, every time a customer comes through the door with the bloody BEEP sounding!" After Sue has laughed she realises that is typical Matt, never too serious for long.

"What have you both got for your breakfasts?" Ives asks when Sue had finished laughing.

"Glad you have come back Matt." Sue and Ives agree. Sue starts to rummage inside her bag. In an appropriate tone Ives states, "I'm trying my chilled milk again with muesli." Ives previously hadn't found the right balance between having warm unpleasant milk or having frozen milk.

"Got couscous from last night. It was nice. Daisy wasn't keen on it. Matt?"

"Half a dozen bananas and bread." The other two pull a face. "You know what I did not know? You can't give these parrots chocolate or avocado, it will kill them."

"Like dogs." To Ives's surprise Sue bursts out laughing. Matt too laughs, albeit reluctantly. Feeling guilty he patronisingly affirms, "Yes, a dog will kill it too."

"No," Ives objects, but now understanding why they are laughing at him, "I've heard a lot of chocolate is poisonous to dogs as well."

"“Oh.”" Sue and Matt simultaneously say and laugh some more. Now this time Ives joins in.

Feeling perked up and with more lights getting switched on around the pool Sue hugs Matt then they head to the changing rooms.

At the end of the swim, Matt who is normally out of the showers quicker, is still standing underneath eating a banana with the grace of a full baby-chimpanzee, he has his last remaining whole one tucked in the waist band of his jammers, the skins of the other four are moving with the water on the shower floor. With his mouth full he points to them so Sue won't slip on them as she enters the showers. A kid is under the other stream. Ives takes off his cap. Matt with his face full, picks up the skins, stepping out making room for Sue, says to Ives,

"'eak oo 'e 'ool aff ood-'ay. An I' eak oo mi oss."

"Okay thanks." Matt heads off to his cubicle. Sue heard the kid tittering at Matt. Ives stands where Matt was. The girl heads off as Jimmy arrived with his shampoos. The older ones are continually last to get to the showers; both out of chivalry letting the little ones use them first and that they help get the lane ropes and flags put away.

"Hope his Sue does not see him like that." Sue tilts her head to indicate she is talking about Matt.

"Or the men in white coats. Ha ha." It is still ceaselessly surprising how Jimmy can follow things considering his shower behaviour.

"That reminds me Ives, have you heard anything from Laura from Bala?"

"Arr, Laura. We still speak through email, to keep in touch but nothing, err, nothing more than that."

"She was really nice."

"Thanks Sue. I really liked her too. It is just unfortunate she is down there. Coach was right though, either fully commit, or draw a line under it. I'm not ready to move down there, I only really knew her a day. She is funny though on emails, and erm, I think, going out with a local now."

"It is good you are still in touch. You know Coach suggested it was best if I did not get involved with Steve. How about you Jimmy and the girl you met?"

"What me?" Jimmy increases his voice volume, "I met no-one! I reckon you're getting mixed up love; you crazy-be'atch you. It WAS a while ago Sue you know?" Sue and Ives laugh just as loud. They head off to

get changed. Jimmy and Ives getting dressed in their cubicles can hear Sue singing her Todd Hanningan inside her cubicle. Her floral voice lures Jimmy to sing along. Not knowing the song keeps him a mute fan.

Jimmy and everyone are sitting around Coach. With his phone on the table Coach is talking about an Olympic swimmer from the mid 80s to the mid 90s called Janet Evans. He was showing them a video of her very unorthodox frontcrawl technique.

[<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K02I7GFwYuw>] He even mentioned she had a small come back after not swimming for sixteen years. Ives approached the table to join in,

"No Ives. Not allowed. You've got a manager you need to speak to. No more burying your head in your sandpit. You've got a deadline." Sue playfully yet firmly tells him.

"But, but, but, I don't want to, he, he smells?"

"Does he now?"

"Don't know, never really spoke to him."

"So he doesn't smell?"

"Don't know. No?"

"Well you can also apologise to him."

"Yes. Next-tody?"

"Now." Ives now changes back to a serious tone,

"Is he even in?"

"Who let us in this morning?"

"Oh yes." Sue shakes her head. "Thanks Sue, I'll go now. I'll just get the letters organised to show him."

Ives walks up to the office. It is only four metres from where they ordinarily sit. The small rectangle window in the door faces Coach's adopted table and is the only window in the office. About to knock he can see the side of manager's head whilst he is sitting at his computer. Ives realises that this man who let them in this morning was not a duty manager, but to be in the office, he is the top manager. Ives knocks on the thick fire-door, it the split second it takes for the boss lean back in his chair to look through the window, Ives tries to recall his name; he has heard Maureen the cleaner talk about him. Ives is waved in with a smile,

"Hi, Eric." Ives says with a raised intonation in case he was wrong.

"Hi Ives." Ives could not help a surprised expression that Eric knew

his name. "How is the swimming going?"

"Good thanks, still making progress. How are you?"

"Maybe not making as fast a progress."

"Well," Ives pauses feeling he is about to give Eric something else to look dour over. He felt his brain quickly weigh up two possible introductions, either an apologetic one for adding to his work load or to be enthusiastic. He stuck to his guns, "Well, you will like this big step forward for us both, if you have a minute?" With no eye contact,

"Sure." Eric says, his loutish and brown eyes survey the papers in Ives's hands through his low square vicar-glasses and mismatching perma-tan.

"These are letters we have handed out to famous swimmers." Ives sees Eric has the word 'love' tattooed on his right knuckle and 'hate' on his left as Ives passes him sheet of paper. "They are all a bit different but this is one we sent to Marcus Rogan." Eric begins to read it. Ives concentrates on Eric's face to decipher a reaction. Nothing manifested. Eric looks upwards.

To Ives, Eric does not look like a manager type, he resembles a scally Uncle-in-law of his; he could also be a world weary but honest taxi driver. Not giving him a chance to reply Ives hand's him Markus Rogan's response. Eric's leaden movements implies he is still not impressed. With kinetic art, "I've also got confirmations from you know Mark Foster and Rebecca Adlington." The mention of Rebecca Adlington sparks a quickening in Eric's eyes, which Ives are observing.

"That is all very impressive. So how can I help?"

"I was wondering if you would like this pool to host it, when the pool is closed on Sunday afternoon before Bridgert swim." Eric pauses. Ives notices he himself is not nervous. Maybe due to there being lots of other pools about he could ask. Ives hopes Eric realises that Ives is aware this.

"On Sundays, I cannot see why not if Lindsey gives it the go ahead for safety and for the schedule. How long will you be wanting it?" Ives thinks quickly. He has not given that much thought,

"The video will be forty-five minutes long, so just an hour and a half to two." From a bunch of tatty papers Eric has picked up something with the outline of a pool schedule,

"It appears that will fit in, have a word with Lindsey. I am sure we

can give you a discount." A sickening feeling brews in Ives's stomach at the thought of money and negotiating cost, he surprises himself saying,

"For now can we have it for free?" Eric gave a look like Ives has kicked him in his shin.

"Free." Eric snorts a laugh.

"Well at least until it gets established."

"There is no such thing as free: that is going to cost us money, we have to pay Lifeguards." Ives interrupts,

"Oh we have our own Lifeguards, well some of yours that will volunteer." This was not totally true Ives has not asked them yet, "Who?"

"Mainly people who have swam in our club and then got jobs with you and also thingy's Sister too." Eric's 'fiscal facial expression' remained steadfast. Protracted to explain but happens instantly Ives's mind computing swiftly remembering something once seen in a film barges in after Eric says,

"Free—" To say,

"Arh thanks I knew you'd have the foresight." Eric laughs at Ives's obvious attempt to twist his statement.

"Let me talk to some people and see if I can get a grant for you. Have you looked into any grants?"

"Grants, no. With no costs and everyone volunteering we just needed to have the prizes in exchange for sponsorship, which we have arranged with Chinyll giving us fifty pound voucher prize each week." Making it all up as he is going along, "Plus I thought it would be wise to have the leisure centre to apply: who would you give more consideration to?" Ives asks rhetorically, "Me or you? You, a handsome-face they are already familiar with and trust and like?"

"Okay, like I said, leave it with me."

"Thank you very much Eric. So we can definitely use the pool, on Lindsey's green light? And you'll get back to me on the money situation?"

"Yes."

"Thank you Eric." Eric passed Ives the letter back to wind up the meeting.

"And don't let this disrupt your swimming training."

"Ha ha, thanks, you sound like Coach." Ives shook Eric's hand on his way out. His anti-chlorine moisturiser still on his hands was maybe

a mistake. Walking out of the door into the stillness that had replaced the humdrum he had left: his friends have all gone off to their varied lives. Ives follows suit. Eric wipes his now greasy right hand on his trousers.

Jimmy and Sue had texted Ives in the day asking how he got on. Ives had no credit to reply.

Ives rushed straight from college to have time to speak Lindsey. Lindsey was not there. Jenny was. Jenny is the other senior swim teacher. Ives thanked Jenny for chasing some scallys away from his locked bike yesterday and then decides to swim some widths as the pool is roped off into three sections. The small kids swimming in the two sections above the moveable floor. The other swim teacher is Emily, a different Emily to the one who has swum in Coynus Cads. This Emily is Lucy's younger sister. Ives met her first. She is smaller but, to Ives, equally good looking. For Ives it is the 'go weak in the knees' good looking. No-one else seems to be as taken by the two sisters as Ives is, that suits him fine.

"Hi Ives."

"Hi Little Day." The other staff have nicked name Lucy Day, Big Day, and younger Emily, Little Day. Ives even thinks the Day's surname go with his brilliantly, with his being Knight. "Arrh, I heard you got pushed in the other day! I'm so sorry. Ives uses the opportunity to hug her, even though he is wet from his pre-swim shower and Emily is not.

"Thanks. Now I am wet again, hehe. I have remembered who the little stains were so they are barred and everyone is under my strict instructions not to let them in."

"You should get their pictures on the wall."

"More reliable if I could come in every Tuesday make sure they are not here."

"Ha ha, I bet, when you get that good job you applied for with the water company, you will now turn it down saying, 'No! Got to stay at pool forever - make sure no-one lets them in'."

"Worth it." Ives can see she is busy so does not embroil Emily Knight-Day, Emily Day-Knight, in any more talking.

"Can you register Swimseye up as a charity buddy?"

"A charity, why?"

"A respected business adviser, the manager, says your best option is to register your gameshow as a charity. An advantage doing that is banks will more compilable to donate prizes."

"Arrh, thanks, thanks for asking him Matt, you are a good friend: I understand what bosses can be like. About the charity, I don't, err, he'll know what he is talking about, a lot more than me, it probably will make things easier for now, but harder in the future if we ever do make money off it; he may not realise that is the goal. Your boss may not know I am wanting to, or think it is viable, to make money. I don't know, something will not feel moral: setting it up as a charity knowing the ultimate goal is to make money off it. I'm so sorry if that puts you in a position with your boss. Tell him I said thanks for the advice. If you can, tell him, I don't know, just blame me, call me names or something so he will know it is not you messing him around."

"Are YOU sure?" Sue asks him.

"Ha ha, no. But something just does not seem right. I just don't want to get Matt moaned at either, by his boss."

"Don't worry about that buddy."

In between swims Ives asks Sue what she had decided over the Kovenes swim club she replies,

"Well I was sort of waiting for you to make up your mind."

"Oh yes. Sorry Sue. Erm, I have thought and thought about it lots. I do have the same thoughts as you about the reasons to go. I also have the same thoughts as you about the reasons to stay." Ives manoeuvres closer to Sue and hugs her. He can stand in the water Sue cannot so he is careful not to drown her. "Just Tuesdays Sue. For now. I'll see first if I am able to improve things here." Ives could see that Sue is upset, he himself is sorrowful. Plus it was time to swim. At the shallow end, as they were swimming fifty sprint, one length slow recovery and fifty sprint, they both look at each other with a feeling of an electric arc coupling their eyes.

Without realising they are doing it, if the rest works out ten seconds or less, normally they leave their goggles over their eyes otherwise they lift them. To not rush the recovery length they have a given rest of thirty seconds. Sue has left her goggles on. Ives

has lifted his and looks right at Sue, she either does not want to talk or is crying, or both. Matt unaware of Ives and Sue's previous discussions starts talking about the chilly he has prefabricated for his tea. In the other rests Ives only felt bold enough to speak to Sue to tell her they will still see each other on Tuesday nights and in the mornings. Neither of which eases her anguish. The only blip to Sue's sad mood subduing her for the whole night was Lee the Lifeguard. There were two unkempt late fifty year old looking men, breaststroke-shuffling themselves down the pool, heads held high talking to each other with electric-cigarettes glowing in their mouths. Lee was not happy at them ignoring him to put the cigarettes away. He fetched the red fire-hose they use for rinsing the floor, and battered the scruffy floundering men and the cigarettes with its cold stream. Their arrogance swept into pathetic whimpering to the regalement and applause of the other pool users. Even Sue giggled, then was quiet for the rest of the night. She was not angry at Ives more mournful: he had not done anything wrong although she thinks he maybe is making a mistake. That is what is upsetting Ives that his loyalties are torn and that he maybe making a mistake. He did not want to bring it up again but felt he should say something, but had no idea what; so he did not.

A dressed Matt seen Sue getting out the showers alone and asked her, "You okay sugarcube?"

"A bit sad really. Won't be coming evenings any more." Saying it out-loud frightened her.

"Why?"

"How can I try to explain... just time for a move. It is no reflection on you or anyone else." Sue lowers her voice to a hush, "Feel a need to. Not getting inspired or pushed or encouraged or developed any more. It is still chronically the same old story; a lot of the sets are stagnant." Sue's voice goes back to normal volume, "Still be here in the mornings so you won't miss me that much."

"So part-time, eh?"

"No, went to Kovenes on Tuesday. There, is a way and I know I've got to go, give it a try. I've got to go. You could come?"

"Kovenes. I was not aware they had a swim club."

"You live there."

"Is it any good?"

"Lots of national swimmers."

"Hmnn, what nights?"

"All except Thursdays. Not sure over the weekend situation."

"I will have to dash off but I will get back to you." Sue could see that she had struck a chord with Matt. She too wondered if that is also why Matt had the lapse last month. She had no time to ask but prioritised,

"Just quickly Matt, for what it is worth, Ives should have not dismissed your offer especially after you asking your boss."

"It is fine Sue, if Ives is happy with that I am. I just do not want him to miss out. He may change his mind, besides I will tell the boss, 'he said no to registering as a charity.' Although the boss was adamant he will not relinquish."

"Doubt Ives will. Personally cannot see how he expects to get money for himself from it. Anyway you need to go."

"Thanks, I will go... Being a dreamer is Ives's asset or cutie mark stamp - See you part-timer tomorrow."

"Yeah his jackasset! Bye Matt. Say hello to Sue. Oh oh oh, don't tell Coach! I'm going to tell him yesterday."

Sue approaches Jimmy when he is on his own and tells him about her not coming and again asks him not to mention it to Coach as she is about to tell him. Jimmy asks lots of details in the way she wished Matt would have. She did not want to be fully honest with Jimmy as he knows Coach better than them all and would probably quite rightly discuss the matter with him. Sue treated the explanation with Jimmy as a practice one with Coach. She also mentions her thoughts about Ives turning down the offer from Matt's boss. Jimmy agrees.

When Ives comes out to the table, everyone has gone except Coach and Jimmy.

"Have you heard about Susan?" Coach asks Ives.

"Which bit?"

"She is not swimming with us on evenings any more." Coach's gallant mask is only semi-opaque. His alarm and heartbreak quickly prevail over Ives.

"She had sort of mentioned it. Did she say why?"

"Mainly due to work, she said it was too hard pushing herself to be here in time."

"Yes I went with her to Kovenes last week. They swim stupidly late

though."

"What times?"

"On Tuesday it was nine until ten."

"That is late, too late." Coach authoritatively bids. Ives and Jimmy could see that Coach was upset. Jimmy thinks it is best to change the subject,

"Why didn't you jump-on Matt's boss's offer? Me and Sue reckon you should do."

"Your ditto do's are probably right. But I still think we can make us some money from it. I knew she thought I should turn it into a charity, but what is the first rule of our swimming club?"

"Never talk about swimming club ha ha." Coach also laughs at Jimmy's comment.

"That's a VHS joke Jimmy. Seriously, what does Coach always tell us in races?"

"Swim faster?"

"No he does not."

"Yes I do."

"No, your FIRST rule."

"Check the blocks are not loose?" Says Jimmy who now genuinely has no clue to what Ives is delving for.

"Yes but no. In a race he says, you say, 'Never ever ever give up.'" Ives disappointed that they were either playing or did not get what he meant. "Applying what I have learnt in swimming always helps me. I am not giving up, No disrespect to Sue whose idea to ask Matt to ask the bank—"

"It was mine lad." Jimmy informs him.

"Oh yes, sorry, it was after you read the letter sorry Jimmy. I did know that, I don't know why I said it." Jimmy pulls a face to obviously pretend to be hurt. Ives patronisingly pats him on his back. "The famous people agreed quite easily, the sport centre said here can host it, maybe for free, so I haven't had that many hurdles yet. My cousin works in a Credit-Union, Rivertons I think I have been told. She has her mortgage with them. I can ask her. It is that six degrees of separation thing everybody knows somebody who knows somebody, who knows somebody."

"I knew someone from the pub who worked in a building society. I think Amy's Dad (Amy is one of the young swimmers they have heard Coach mention) works in a bank. Wait sorry, not a bank, he owns butcher shops." Coach uselessly informs them. Jimmy and Ives cannot

help to laugh a bit.

"You better sort it out quick-smart lad: you realise Sue would fight Glasgow for something she believes in." As planned, Jimmy thoughtfully changing the subject did helped to take Coach's mind off Sue's semi departure; he realises he has errored and looped back.

On Monday Ives got an email at diner time from Matt's phone,

'I'm really sorry buddy. The boss won't go for it any other way. Sorry.'

He was glad of Matt's attempt. He asked someone from his college to text to Matt's number,

'No need to apologise. Thank u4 trying & thank ur boss please.'

Ives kept good company in college, or maybe the misfits. He did not spend any time with them outside of college though due to his swimming and due to the fact that his friends at the college are the type who kept themselves to themselves. Aside from science fiction the few places they did go, mainly gaming events, were definitely not Ives's thing. A couple of them had small motorbikes, well the largest they could legally have. Ives was wise enough to comprehend he is foolish and reckless enough to hurt himself badly riding a motorbike. Considering he had his swimming to lose, it was not worth the risk to him.

Sue has stayed friends with lots of the people she had grown up with. That suits Sue as they are nice girls who know her well and so understand about her swimming commitments. All of them have gone into good careers straight from school.

Matt partly grew up near Northwich in Cheshire. His mother moved for work purposes to Kovenes, a satellite town of the city where the

pool is. Going to Northwich to see his friends on the train or coach is an enjoyable break for Matt and he really enjoys it. The nights he rushes off from swimming are more likely the nights he has arranged to meet them somewhere.

Jimmy's friends are surprisingly rough considering how gentle and kind Jimmy is. They are all from his estate and Jimmy is the only swimmer from the club who frequently drinks. He goes to an 'old man' pub in the middle of their estate with his friends. Some of them had been going since they were fourteen and smoking since they were twelve. Not Jimmy though.

Katherine is that year, or so, younger than the others. None of her swimmer friends are sure what she was like at school or how she was treated. Katherine's friends are from her running club, boys and girls who she is more familiar with than her swimmer friends; although a lot of nastiness can surface in the running club. No-one has ever been horrible to her in Coynus Cads. Katherine's more frequent laughing and talking shows she is becoming less diffident with her swimmers.

Katherine was originally in Bridgert, the club Coynus Cads is a spin-off from, but the main Coach there did not have either the tools or the understanding to give Katherine what she needed. That is one of the reasons Coach Mint has taken umbrage with Simon; how badly he treats anyone who is not currently one of his fickle favourites. Duplicating Katherine's experience, Ives too was palmed-off to Coach Mint within a week of going to Bridgert; for Ives it was mainly due to him being a bit of a relatively late starter and never being shown butterfly and the like. It was strongly suggested to Sue that she moves to Coynus Cads as she criticised how swimmers including her Daisy were repeatedly abandoned. Jimmy came straight to Coynus Cads as Coach Mint lives in his estate and his mother approached Coach. Having left his local club in his move Matt as a chance encounter happened to be swimming one Coynus club night and spoke to Coach who invited him. As a result, Coynus Cads have the most talented and most full-of-personality swimmers compared to Bridgert. Of comparable ages Bridgert's training is also different. Bridgert concentrate more on sprints, fifty metres and even twenty-five. One-hundred metres being the longest they ever swim. Coach

Mint can see from the times in training that his long distance swimmers are still swimming sprints quicker than Bridgert. Bridgert is not a totally bad club. They are more geared to younger swimmers from the age of four to ten who the teachers do a good job of. One of which, an eighty year-old man called Errol who Coach Mint really respects and enjoys his company. One downside of the setup is when Coynus Cads compete they have to do it as Bridgert. As a result Coach does not enter his club for as many competitions as they should.

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Sadness and Comedies

On Friday night, the first week after Sue had left the evening practices, at the end of the session Coach tells them all, "I've got forms here for Blackpool."

Sue has already missed some mornings. She never came on Thursday evening either. The reason she texted Coach is due to tiredness from all the late nights, promising she hopes she will soon get accustomed to it and not miss any more mornings. To inform her she has been missed, Ives emails Sue the gossip this Friday night:

Hi Sue,

Hope you are okay. Did not really get chance to speak to you this morning. Hope Kovenes is still going well for you. I think you may have made the right choice in going. You seem to have the knack for noticing things before other people. Catwalk is not swimming on Monday and Wednesday nights and Thursday mornings any more. She is going to the dock to swim open-water those nights. She has threatened (again) to start swimming Thursdays nights though as she said people who she used to pwn are now judging her in the running club as she can't really get under nineteen minutes for her 5k. Me and Matt were talking. He was saying you could easy do triathlons. He says you have a great build for running and that you are fast swimming (in the warm-up you lapped her twice in the first 12 on crawl). He is still annoyed that you are not national yet. I said there is a beauty to perfection. Swimmers swim beautifully. Watching runners is poetry in motion. Cyclist look like they are at home and in-tune with their bikes. I told him I think triathletes are artless. They have no beauty. They attack and murder the three disciplines they do. The victories come from fitness; some people may see the tenacity of the human soul as ruggedly beautiful; but that's getting too deep for me. Back to Matt: he was very zealous about you not being national. It kept me quiet. I don't know what is going on with him. Oh, I failed in finding Katherine a bike. No affordable

ones out there any more! Mine was £10 and have rode to Newcastle and back on it.)

Matt is not his usual self, missing more and more. The other random slow adults have come even less this week, Zoe and slow-Mark. Jimmy is wanting to do more and more endurance work on his own. So, last night it was only really me in the lane. The first minute I was singing your Todd Hannigan song, 'Further than the bow' [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XArWWjyIUQQ>] whilst swimming, as even Phelps never had a training lane to himself. It is the best song for a swimmer to have in their head. Thank you for sharing your find. Then the second minute with no-one to swim against I was lonely, singing 'All by myself'. The third minute I was like WTF. Not wanting to just have two people in the lane Coach puts two kids in. Not the two fastest kids, with flippers on. No. The two most demented kids. It was just stupid. They were swimming all over the lane, not keeping to their left and then on the backstroke they were zig-frakin-zaggin. It was just dangerous. They would push off right in front of you. No sense to wait half a second to let the big guy right behind you go by. In the first five minutes I did not swim a constant 8 metres without stopping for them, or checking. I did not sing at all. I got out. The second time ever, I got out without getting a swim in. There was nothing else to do, except possibly secretly drown the kids whilst the Lifeguard gently sleeps. Did not feel right moaning at Coach he could not be seen to have a nearly empty lane. What make me feel even worse than missing the night's training that I was looking forward to was - I told science-fictions to Coach. I told Coach my stomach was bubbly. I only said that thinking both me and him, in his heart of hearts would know the real truth so it would not be a lie, so then he would do something about the demented kids. How could he have not noticed or realised? So I got out.

We were all excited about Blackpool, then Matt said he is not swimming, a bit of me died when he said that, it is sooo heart wrenching. It is like he is not interested any more. He has so much more to give. Jimmy is not doing 1500m any more: he is focussed on his 5 and 10kms for now. And you. For Blackpool, if it was a choice between swimming for Coynus Cads and Kovenes, you'd proudly go for Coynus Cads. With the choice being Bridgert or Kovenes, you'll probably choose Kovenes. They will

so want you to. God knows what Katherine is doing so that leaves me. Go on my own? I am really thinking about coming over to your club, not just for Blackpool but I can't have any more nights like tonight. Coming away a glum-plum, like you were.

Sorry for another essay. I am venting. Looking forward to hearing how Kovenes is going.

Oh it is not all weepy-leaks by the way!!!! My cousin has sorted me the cheques and prize money!!!!!!! The big ass ones!!!!!! They will even have someone in a suit come down and present the winners with it and take photographs for their magazines. Maybe it is just that they don't trust me lol.

(Hated putting Matt in an awkward position but it has always been the plan to one day make money with the show. It will all go towards buying a boat for us all. A refuge we can stay on, all of us, when we need to avoid the crapness at home. AND I SHALL CALL HER SWIMQUISITION!!!!!! LOL.)

Good night SuePoo XXXXXXXXXXXX.

The club never really see each other of a weekend, the last few times it has been in Eglasby on Sunday nights. Sue and Jimmy do their outdoor swimming Saturday and/or Sunday mornings. If the weather is terrible Sue sometimes picks him up, other days the two could swim both mornings and not come across each other in the murk. Missing not seeing everyone together Ives thought about ways to get them all together. His plan, an email he wrote tonight, at eight-thirty p.m. Friday:

Hello Everyone,

I have emailed this as everyone is not on Facebook. Please 'reply all' on your email so everyone can read your responses.

TOMORROW NIGHT – I need a funny host for the show. Someone who will do it for free maybe. Anyone want to go to out to the pubs with 'up and coming' stand-up comedians looking for a host? It will be a laugh! It will be good if we could all make it. We will go to the free entry pubs, there seem to be lots in student areas??????????

Ives.

Once Sue and Matt replied saying that they would like to go but it was too short notice and suggested next Saturday, everyone else agreed. Everyone including Katherine.

The week in-between Ives was all too well conscious to Coynus Cads's demise. He then texted Coach telling him he is not sure what he is doing this week. The children's section of the club carried on with the regular strong-numbers, it was the older ones. The club ever so quickly went from the most intensely talented club in the country, five out of five of them could be rated in the top ten in the country in their fields, to a club that resembled a bunch of rowdy children. No-one knows how it happened so quick, Coach is as shocked as everyone else but additionally a hundred times more upset. It was one of those freak occurrences for such a talented group to be all the same generation, all within a similar geographic region and all to be in his club, and now he has lost them, slipped through his fingers. On the Friday night he looks at the lane they would be in, now full of kids hanging off the wall instead of swimming through the set. The eyes behind his thick lenses lower, the lump in his throat rises. All of a sudden he feels alone. He feels vulnerable. His eyes pinball to try to survey what or who is to his left and right. Coach is even compelled to move his eyes to see the floor he is standing on. Somehow it all looks unfamiliar to him.

If something was getting on top of him in a lesson he would quickly lament to one of the young adults who would most of the time recite a modified bolstering catchphrase of his that would make him smile and thankful that some of them do listen to him. Now he is alone

with the loud children and his louder thoughts that he has messed up more than he ever has in his life, that no other coach would lose them. The noise, the humidity, the power of his grief and his chagrin are too much,

"Keep swimming!" He shouts and shuffles to the tiled windowsill that backs onto the public viewing area, which he now sits upon as the whiteness of the grout pinches his thoughts. He feels weak, sick and his heart pounding. Coach removes his glasses and rubs clamminess from his brow and eyes; looking at the film on his hand he wonders if it is tears or sweat. The newest Lifeguard sitting in his chair on the other side of the pool notice's Coach's unusual behaviour. It is Sam, an ex-Bridgert swimmer who was taught to swim by Coach when he was young. He climbs down from his high-chair and walks over to him,

"Are you okay?"

"Yes thanks. Just one of those days."

"Are you sure? Do you want a drink?"

"No thanks – Actually, if you don't mind please, I've got water in my bag down there." Sam is familiar with Coach's bag on the windowsill further down the pool. A beige rucksack that probably started off in life brown. Sam sees a plastic bottle in the side pouch, half full with water. He brings it over to Coach who even though slumped is fighting to keep his eyes on his swimmers. Sam, with his eyes on the pool, stands next to him whilst he drinks it. After a few minutes Coach feeling his triceps trembling as he forces himself to stand to carry on taking the session. For the thirteen minutes remainder of his half-hour poolside shift Sam kindly does not go far from Coach, watching the pool from nearby him. If nothing else the unruliness of the children prevent Coach's mind wondering where he went wrong. The thought of getting his vending machine coffee helps get him through.

He sits alone at the table watching for the swimmers to pass on their way out so he can tell them 'well-done' as usual most rush by, their parents keen to get them home. Some kids though stop for a chat, or even hug whilst their parents ask about their little prodigy's progress.

On his own, going to Aldi on his bike without Ives, for his meal for one, he knows there is company at his local pub. He also knows that

there are catalysts for any of his health concerns in the pub too. Packing his stopwatch away he notices there is a text on his phone,

'Hi Coach, we are all meeting up tomorrow night, going to stand up shows, all of us would really like it if you came.'

Coach does not reply straight away. He thinks whilst on his ride home. He would really like to see his swimmers. The reason for his reticence is deciding if it is appropriate or not to meet his swimmers in town. As it stands he decides:

'Thank you for your invite. I hope you are all well. People may think it is strange me on my own out with all of you. We will all have to meet up for a chat though when it is more appropriate. Take care.'

Coach's text breeds a bustle between them all. They do not know what to say to both convince him to come out and apologise for putting him in an awkward position over the invite. They all text-turn to Sue. Sue's response is for Ives to forward this text to Coach,

'We've known each other for so long, sorry sometimes we forget about people who don't know you as well as us. We also would like to see Zoe and slow-Mark too, if they are not busy. We will be in the Orange Mallard next door to the playhouse from about 7pm. If not, we totally understand. Either bump into you tomorrow or arrange something different next week.'

A few hours later Ives forwards the text he receives from Coach,

'Zoe and slow-Mark will go out tomorrow. We will see you at 7. Take care.'

Ives rode into his bike into town. They were in the top end of town so he thought it would be safe among the student bikes. He left it in the main thoroughfare of the student campus and walks the remaining five minutes to see Sue heading towards him. Sue got a lift from Steve,

"Ooh, don't you look pretty all dressed up!" They give each other a quick hug. Sue has a talent with using minimal make-up. A small bit of bronzer highlights one of her many exquisite features her movie-star cheekbones.

"You look smart too."

"Thanks. How long have you been here?"

"One minute. Steve dropped me off. Got out the car when we seen you walking."

"Arrh, he should have stayed. I like Steve."

"He had to get off. Daisy was with him."

"Have you got the?" Ives tilts his head as if it is a worldly secret. Sue smiles and nods in affirmation.

"So, what is the gossip from the pool? Whilst it is just us two."

"Well Sue went to Kovenes. Well first actually Matt had not been happy for a while. Then Sue went. Matt is just going to the gym in the mornings not swimming. He has not been of an evening. Has he been much to Kovenes?"

"Sometimes, not regular though. I know of Matt and err me! What of Katherine?"

"What I have heard, as I have not been, is Catwalk is not predictable any more, she is going to Coynus less often and if she does go it has been on running days. Jimmy has cut down to every other day but getting in early when he does, or staying late in the mornings. He was doing his own routines; the downside is he was doing them slower and getting in the way a lot of a bit."

"And you?"

"Totally missed out on some swimming this week gone, but, I, I said that didn't I? Told you last night in Kovenes. I felt sick doing that on a Coynus night. It is just with the numbers dropping: Matt, Jimmy and Katherine. The kids Coach is having to put in the lane due wrong. Plus there is no-one to swim off, if you know what I mean? So

what about Matt?"

"Yeah, you also asked me of Matt haha. What didn't get chance to find out is how is Coach?"

"Not, err, not sure. Probably as expected maybe. We will soon find out."

Matt, Coach, Jimmy, Katherine, slow-Mark and Zoe all turn the corner from the hill together. They were all on the same train. The night is a warm night. Katherine and Sue have complementing light dresses, Sue's is white with a green floral design. Katherine's is a similar hip-hugging cut and plain blue. The males all have short sleeve shirts except Coach who seems to have a long sleeve shirt under the jacket he is wearing, smart, only let down by the 'old man' hat he is wearing. They all shake hands and hug Zoe, Katherine and Sue.

"I like your shoes." Ives tells Katherine, who he has already complimented as he did Sue.

"Shame about the ostrich feet inside ha ha."

"Don't be daft!"

"A podiatrist told me for my age I had the most deformed feet he'd seen. It will be from all my running."

"Take no notice." Ives reassures her. "My cousin was a ballerina you should have seen some of their feet, yet they still dance and prance."

"Shall we go in?" Coach asks. Coach hovers at the back with slow-Mark. Letting them find a table. They go for one near the back, stage left.

The dark wooden bars, with the entrance between, line the entrance to the softly lit room. There are about twelve large round tables in the room with the stage opposite the entrance they came in. The room has a slight smell of old curtains. There are separate chairs around the perimeter of the room. When they are all seated with handbags and what not down,

"I am happy to buy you all as many soft drinks as you like. But if you feel more adult buying your own drinks that is up to yourselves."

"Thanks Coach." They all say. Coach flinches at them using the word 'Coach' here. With kindred spirits Jimmy and Matt are straight up reaching in their pockets for their fake IDs from when they were younger, walking over to the bar with slow-Mark. They are all fond

of slow-Mark, who is about forty-five. He has been friends with Coach for a long time and them two often drink together. The swimmers are taken with him, he is very funny, often in a Laurel and Hardy fashion; the only thing that sometimes badgers them is that he always saying to them that they swim too much and should rest more. He is buoyantly full of compliments for them and does try his best to keep out of their way in the lane. In his youth he was a gymnast then in his early twenties went into boxing. He started swimming when his children did. He often is in the pool with stained black hands as he is a French Polisher.

"Ives, Susan, Katherine and Zoe? What can I get you?"

"Erm, I'll, I'll just have a pint glass of water please." That was something else strange for them to hear by a bar.

"Susan?"

"Thanks, just a lemonade or something please. I'll pay"

"No these are on me. Katherine?"

"Err, the same please."

"And lovely Zoe?"

"I'll come with you, give you a hand."

"No. I'll be fine thanks: them are there." Coach points to Matt, Jimmy and slow-Mark. "What is it?"

"A small white wine please in lemonade. If you are sure?"

"Got it." Coach says as he walks off. Sue and Katherine immediately talk to Zoe trying to make her more comfortable as in the pool with her often being in a different lane they don't get much opportunity to speak. Zoe is that bit older than them, she is late twenties. Her mother taught Sue how to swim many years ago. She is a nice girl. She was a good swimmer, as a youngster she swam in Coynus Cads, then stopped at about sixteen. As a kid she would talk a lot and need gentle encouragement. Three months ago she decided to swim again albeit haphazardly. It may have been as she left her job as a Lifeguard and went to work for a housing trust. She keeps her foot in the door with the council, doing occasional shifts in Tohunden pool. They are glad but surprised she chose to come out tonight.

When Coach returns, they give him the present they all put money towards. slow-Mark and Zoe did not know about it but Sue was able to get her to sign the card and Matt got slow-Mark to sign without Coach noticing. They had all written a message inside thanking Coach for everything they have achieved through his companionship.

"I'll read through the card at home. Thank you all." Coach was the type of man to be embarrassed reading it there and then. Sue excitedly nudges the wrapped present closer to him. Coach looks around to see everyone smiling at him. "I'll open this at home too." He sees everyone's smiles turn to surprised disappointment. Coach laughs as he changes his mind and quickly rips at the paper. The present is a sleek glass tankard. The futuristic intractable curve of the handle mixed with the slight, high corseted shape of the beaker makes it was advertised as a twenty-second century revival of Streameline Moderne: basically it looks like something Captain Kirk would swig his ale from by himself. Coach reads to himself the white engraved large lettering which state, 'Thank You for the rest of our lives.' "The glass itself is beautiful and so is the sentiment. Thank you. You should not have gone to all that expense. I am grateful for all your friendships too." Coach tentatively slides it back into the box. He stands and goes around the table shaking the lad's hand and giving the ladies a hug. Everyone smiles at each other relieved how precious he already seems to be over the glass and that he was moved by the engraved words. The words, like the present, Katherine had the biggest hand in arranging.

"Do Kovenes know you are capable and entered you in Blackpool?"

"Yeah, but they did not have anyone to swim the four-hundred or the eight anyway."

"It will be good but strange seeing you there for Kovenes. What about you Ives I have not had your forms back. What are your plans?" Ives looked like he was about to be hit by a truck.

"I've, I'm, er." Sue knew Ives was about to effectively leave Coynus Cads verbally confirming what his absences implied, by telling Coach he was going to get Kovenes to enter him. Sue speaks up,

"Why don't I swim for Bridgert this time, it can be all of us together maybe for the last time. Katherine too, do anything or do your four-hundred IM, you'll win easily. Matt too. You have been gym-training lots, you could even call it a type of taper—"

"And the gym work always helps." Ives interrupting Sue. Sue presses on,

"Yeah, Ives yeah. So that just leaves you Jimmy. They don't do an open attachment?"

"No." Coach confirms. Sue continues,

"Will you do the fifteen-hundred?"

"No there is no point darling, I haven't been training for it. Plus Ives is doing it."

"I'd just do, do, the eight-hundred?"

"Thanks Ives, but no, ha ha. I'll be there supporting and assisting and being cool. You can all come for my Southport swim the following week."

"It is a deal." They all agree.

"BLACKPOOL" Katherine states raising her glass to the centre. The swim team all make the toast.

"COACH" Matt then states. Again they put their glasses to the centre. Ives looks over to slow-Mark and Zoe asking,

"Are you two ever going to compete?" The two both laugh but grateful for Ives's polite token invite.

In the quiet that followed Coach took the opportunity to make an announcement,

"I have put a request in to the pool to have adult training sessions. I don't know if you will be interested." They all look at each other excited, then they all look at Sue. Then all looking to Sue for a response internally got her back up, with the insinuation being it was all Sue's fault nobody has trained normally.

"Would that not mean even more work for you though Coach?" Ives inquires.

"I may get Lindsey to take some of the Coynus Cads kids sessions and also the adult 'learn to swim' sessions. It is not confirmed but have a think about it. I am nearly an old man soon." They customarily shake their heads to dispute the 'old' description.

"What are your intended times Coach?" Matt speaks up.

"We will work around what it best for anyone who is interested."

With workable times mentioned and discussed they soon descend into general chitchat for a few minutes until the first act is introduced. Zoe went with Coach and slow-Mark to buy some more drinks.

The comedians are scheduled to perform in fifteen minute sets. All the tables have pieces of paper and pencils on the table to write comments about them. There was not much interval between the first four. At one point Jimmy got up to go to the bar and one of the comedians shouted to him,

"No dancing." That was the most they laughed. Although they were all smiling throughout.

"Who was your favourite?" Sue asks them all. Her favourite response was from Katherine,

"None." They did give Sue some constructive comments she could jot down on the paper.

Katherine is joking about something with Coach and Zoe. Nearly finished scribbling insights down, with everyone else immersed in their own conversations Sue asks Ives,

"That reminds me, what was this over your boat?"

"Yes, erm, the email erm, well, you know none of us often mention our parents and home life; everyone has their reasons why. This boat is going to be a den for us all. We can all go and stay on it any time for as long as anyone wants. It will not be a partying boat or somewhere to stay after a night out in town. It will, erm, it will be a home, that we all care for. It will be a designated happy place. People can moan and be blue but as soon as they step aboard only happy and positiveness allowed. The boat will be cared for inside and out, kept neat and tidy and everyone on board will look after each other."

"The way some of us have been of late it will be a full boat."

"Good. Busy but happy. And hopefully big."

"Noticed that before, most of us do not talk of things like that any more. Think for us it is a given. A given there is always some situation with someone. The pool is a bit of a refuge."

"Do you find that it is hard to swim with fluidity... fluidity, can't say that..."

"Fluidity?"

"Fluid. Fluidity. If I've been annoyed it takes a while to settle down, it does alter my stroke, no matter how much I don't want it to."

"Totally the same. When you see swim coaches or parents screaming at kids, we are like, 'durh, it is so seeable that's not going to help!'. "

"I wonder, Sue, what we will be like when we are parents, if our kids will swim."

"All of us will be fantastic parents. We have all experienced one end of the scale and seen the other end in action. We will be good. Will get my tykes confident when very young trying all different

sports and let them discover what lights up their spirit."

"We can all see if a kid has the knack - they have the knack.

Scre... yeah screaming at them makes them too tense to feel for it.

You know what you are talking about as you've had lots of experience

Sue with kids in your job."

"Some experience. Most parents either don't get the idea of sports or are totally over the top. Bawling at the kids forcing them to go to football when they don't want to. Yeah, encourage, support but mainly ask, 'what can I do to help?' That will be good."

"Do you think, err, all that screaming is to make up for themselves not being good?"

"That is a bit text book. Don't know what turns a parent into a nark. Remember that Dad in the Manchester meet 'there is no point breathing because you fail at everything you do.' All because he came third!"

"I know you are not into your bikes Sue, but Tim the tri-athlete once told me he heard someone screeching. As he cycled closer to overtake it was a kid on a bike time-trial racing. His dad, cycling behind him calling him a lazy slob and then even slyly pushing him up a hill in a race! I am glad we do not have parents like that."

"Yes. There are always people out there worse off." Sue stoically says.

"A lot worse." After an emotional gaze at each other, with a different prosody, Sue jaggedly professes,

"Why are we leaving then. Coach has been so good to us. For all of us." Sue is remembering all the times when coming from home she has been on the verge of asphyxiation from tears and the accompanying snot, dropped-throat and laboured breathing; Coach knowing the exact words to say to help.

"I don't know Sue. Maybe it is a leaving the nest thing?"

"Could be? This adult club sounds good."

"Ha ha, it sounds like, like, a naughty club, calling it an 'adult club'. Ha ha."

"A club with rubber hats, pull buoys shoved between legs. Ha ha..."

"Breaststrokes, ha ha. People asking can they go in front." Ives plugging away at speaking through his laughter.

"It's okay, I won't touch it with my mouth." Sue's laughing continues sparkling compared to Ives's who says,

"I don't get that one." Sue settles before she answers,

"When asking for a drink from a germophobe's bottle."

"Ohh." Sue and Ives's laughter is as strong as all their friends there, each group having their own merry laugh. Jimmy, Matt and slow-Mark especially have been bubbling like a jacuzzi.

Sue's family situation is that her Mum and older sister died when Sue was ten. It was sort of a road accident but the cause was a brick wall that collapsed on top of the car. Sue always thought that it was under suspicious circumstances, but as she has gotten older she thinks it was nothing more than the simple fact that her Mother had plainly had a row with her Dad. Daisy was still a baby. Sue being only just turned ten found it difficult to completely understand the adult pondering and 'what ifs' and so made best sense of the blanks in explanations and guilt in the grief. Her Dad coped well in the situation; better than most Sue imagines. Coach who had also been through losses, having lost his wife helped Sue through a bad patch with her Dad, with the advice she still remembers verbatim,

"Any gladiator can hold his head up high in victory. But the scars and limps from the battle are always going to be there. They have still been through the mill." For Sue, the extreme emotions she has been a party to was not the worst. The worst has been finding it very difficult to cope with her Dad's partners. When she was younger she did not have logic to blunt the emotion of seeing her Dad interested in other women. As she got older all the logic of realising her Father was right to seek out companionship still could not quash the emotions of some sort of betrayal; although she fought and fought it. When trying to behave she had been nice to cruel women in his life; failing to behave she had been cruel to nice women in his life. All in all, it remains an ongoing situation and still not shedding any of the old guilts accusations and blames especially in her Father's constitution. Sue's Dad occasionally has gone to some of the open-water swim events with her when they are in fancy locations. He briefly swam some in his youth. He has never shown any interest in her pool swims. The other swimmers have noticed her Dad would recurringly say to Sue that he would and could do better than she swam, but then hides it in jest. They all unnervingly hated hearing her Dad say that. The thing that has kept Sue so sane considering her home environment is her mature and sensible nature. The same nature she resentfully wishes to change.

Jimmy is from a huge family of siblings. Ten he has got. Seven of them brothers. He is one of the middle ones. Everyone who gets to meet Jimmy's jolly parents takes an instant shine to them. Jimmy likes them the most. His parents have done an excellent job, all of Jimmy's siblings are very popular. It must be a family trait as, like Jimmy, they seem to be the type who are never down for long. They have themselves to congratulate for that as they have all tenderly helped to raise each other. His parents have always been on his case over his school work, where Jimmy has lived up to his potential. His parents are continuously happy to listen to Jimmy and support his swimming. They do not have much free time to attend Jimmy's meets or help with his training. For his training his oldest brother, who had swam, when he is in the area will help Jimmy with his training. His brother's face is sometimes seen amongst the poolside onlookers during training. Jimmy pays the help forward he has had in the past from his brother by encouraging with his much younger siblings in their endeavours. He jokingly says he swims, especially the marathon swims, as he enjoys the peace.

Matt was raised singularly by his Mother who he is close to. He has no brothers or sisters. It is rare for them to ever disagree or argue. The only sadness Matt has due to his mother is seeing all the times she has had to struggle working to support herself and him. Now Matt is working he hopes that they should be able to catch up on some of what they have missed out on. His Dad is never mentioned. He realises that he must never have helped the family financially and he reads between the lines that he actually left his mother with debt. Matt is good in the way he invariably lets his mother know how grateful he is to her. When the time comes for him to be a parent he feels that he cannot go far wrong parenting with even half the earnestness of his mother. He also would duplicate the friendly and honest aspect of their relationship.

Ives's parents are together. His Mum and Dad get on well. He has an older brother and sister; both have moved abroad. His parents were always happy to pay for him to swim and always ensured he had goggles, even though they never had a lot of money. That serves to baffle Ives as his family would never support his swimming with encouragement or interest but were generous to a fault. There are

people who have their Fathers for coaches, Ives's is nothing like that. His Dad had no qualms about making him late for or miss training. He felt ashamed even having to wear a swim cap and systematically hid it so they would never find out. His parents would also mock swimmer's attire they seen on the television. They don't know what stroke nor even what distance Ives swims. Ives does not have animosity for their lack of interest in his goals. He now can see it is a confidence thing, confidence in their own competence. He can see his Mum and Dad are clever, his Dad in every instance calls himself thick. Ives wonders if it was his Dad's school that made him doubt his own ability or his Dad's parents. Ives's Mum is the kindest and gentlest person he has ever met. Ives is unaware if it was from his Dad's parents or even his Dad's sister or brother but Ives's Dad has other demons too. Ives has sometimes begrudgingly disclosed the minimum to Sue for advice when Ives's Dad had caused him to feel like the worst human being alive for absolutely no reason. Sue has unchangingly been sensitive but also told him 'that is what parents do.' Ives is not sure to what scale is normal. From then on Ives does all his homework and so spends most of his time psychologically cowed to be shut in his bedroom. Ives has never mentioned his gameshow. He found it is the best way to win over their 'mind wrecking hang-ups' all the way to beating 'passive aggression'. He does not see all those as flaws in his Dad, but the scars from the world his Dad grew up in. He would do anything for his parents. He aspires to be as grounded and have the work ethic of his Father and the kind, wise and gentle heart of his Mother.

Katherine and her younger sister live with their Auntie and Uncle. The Auntie being their Mother's sister. Their Dad works on distant oil rigs and so is away a lot, more than people who work on UK rigs. When he is back he spends every second he can with them. He is eternally happy to fund Katherine's running and her Sister is a keen cake baker and decorator. She has all the special equipment and has innovated some unique and beautiful works of art. The Auntie and Uncle never had any children of their own. Katherine is very open and honest more than any average person, but no-one in the pool has delved any further into Katherine's or anyone else's circumstances as there are boundaries they do not want to cross. Ninety-nine percent of the time Katherine gets along with her sister and is very

close, like all families they do have their tiffs but are soon forgotten. She feels her Dad is ready to start explaining their situation to them. She has found when she should be treasuring every second with her hero, her Dad, the question is on her mind. Katherine has had a lasting penchant for Chemistry and can see herself studying that in university away from home. Hoping to ultimately get involved in product development in possibly textiles as a back-up to her sporting aspirations. Katherine also gets along with her Auntie and Uncle. Although they are very different people she sees her Auntie as very kind. She has more of an affinity for her Uncle and so has a good relationship with him. He has always treated her like an adult and they are abidingly laughing and joking.

The second round of comedians were more the group's cup-of-tea. After a debate, it is Zoe who volunteers to get the contact details for the three male comedians they endorse. The stand-ups were all forty plus and happy to give their details to anyone, especially a good looking female as Zoe. What everybody, excluding slow-Mark, found the funniest was Matt. Ives asks, "We all like slow-Mark-here a lot. Although he insists it is not offensive to him, can we all stop calling him slow-Mark please? Plus we must sound bad to anyone passing by." With a raised beer in his hand Matt stands, "Hear, hear! Arise differently-speeded-Mark."

It was a very intense night out for them all. The hardest thing in the night was when it was time for them to say their goodbyes, grateful for what their swimming family have done for them.

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Tedium

Ives,

Help! Where do I swim this week!!!????? Do I carry on swimming in Kovenes or wait for our new club after Blackpool? Don't want to go back to kiddy one. Want a fresh start. What are you doing? Blackpool this weekend!!! Help!?!?!?

Hello SuePa

It is a predicament. I'll think. You think too. If you are definitely not going to Coynus. Can I come to your café? I have a present for your Daisy.

Ives X.

Sue lives about a twenty minute cycle from Ives. He has not often met up with Sue outside from swimming. The twice he has it has been in a café on a row of shops at the bottom of Sue's street. Ives thinks it is a strange spot: with your back to the café looking to the left, where Ives has travelled through, it looks a quaint and old fashioned area, with a narrow single road sandstone bridge under the rail track that has the appearance, length and block-work of a tunnel. The bridge is ivy-covered and the two detached houses are to all extents and purposes cottages. Looking up to Sue's inclining road it has the character of a reasonable and average suburb street. Looking backwards to the shops with two stories of flats above some shops are empty and the ones in use need money spending on them, except for the shiny off-licence. Looking to the right it looks half residential and half neglected overly wide thoroughfare.

The café shop front is red with yellow or once-white livery, Ives

cannot discern which it is. To his left he locks his bike outside of the café to the metal track for the shutters. He rests the saddle on the glass so he can keep his picket on it from inside the café. Walking to the right to get to the entrance glancing through the window he cannot see Sue. He is about ten minutes later than he told Sue. He steps in and looks where he could not see from the window. He decides that Sue must also be running late.

"She has just nipped to the loo my lovely." The mother-like woman said to a surprised Ives that she remembered him.

"Thank you." Ives goes and sits by his bike howbeit ten millimetres of glass away.

"She was sitting there mind." She looks towards a row of, pub-salvaged, brass and maroon-vinyl stools facing a worktop attached to the wall that runs from the café entrance to the kitchen.

"Thanks, but my bike..." Sue comes out and sees Ives and picks up her stuff from the small high table. "Home work?"

"Wasting my time writing of lollipops and candy-canes. All they want us to do is quote the latest buzzword-jargon as proof I have learnt. All to be read by someone who does not care. As if being able to spout the unrealistic, clichéd and cheesy comments reflects on my ability to do my job. My boss who is great, hates that I have to do them. Even she knows they are shallow nonsense. Ooh haha; sorry to moan."

"Do you want any help?"

"What do you know of nannying?"

"Children should be seen and not heard. Spare the rod and, keep your job?"

"No, done them now thanks. It is good to see you." Sue stands back up to hug Ives.

"You too. What are you drinking?"

"Eh?"

"What were you drinking?"

"Just finished a tea." Sue says as if she needed it.

"If we are not going to Coynus, I'll, erm, I'll get something. Do you want?"

"Yeah I might."

"I'll get hot water and some toast. How much is the toast?" Sue pulls a face to say, 'I don't know and nor should you ask'. Sue spreads her papers onto the table, stands up and pulls Ives's shirt for him to follow.

"Hmnn, something light? Actually, copy off you Ives. Melinda."
"Where do yo get all these good looking boys from?"
"They follow me around. You can keep this one if you want, he is annoying."
"Can I? Thanks." Melinda leans over the counter and grabs Ives's cheek with her right hand squeezes and pulls it. It hurts Ives. Ives keeps quiet.
"Can I have another pot of tea please, a pot of boiled water and some toast. How many do you want Ives?"
"Err, four please."
"Seven toasts please Melinda."
"Brown?"
"Please."
"What do you want bringing over with them butters? Jams?" Ives smiling shakes his head,
"Nothing thanks."
"I've got some marmalade too or Marmite." Sue eye's shine,
"Ooh. Marmite for one please." Ives pulls a face.
"That will be two-twenty please sweetheart." Ives already had some money out, he gave Sue two-fifty. She takes one pound fifty, ruffling in her bag she gets a pound coin. Melinda writes down the order and goes into the back. Sue shows Ives seventy pence in her hand. He shakes his head, she says,
"Take it." For whatever reason in a way that scared Ives so he took it.

They return to sit down near the window. Ives has something flat, wide and about just under three foot long wrapped in a black bin bag.

"Is Marmite good or bad for you?" Sue posits. Ives pouts and shrugs his shoulders.

"Present for your Daisy."

"What is it? Or is best not to ask?"

"I bought it in a car-boot sale, I think, or a farmer selling stuff from his land. It is a road sign. Pimbo Lane!"

"Really? Ha. Ha. Haha."

"I remember you said when she'd pass road signs that said Pimbo it would send her into hysterics. I was passing this morning on a bike ride, instead of swimming, and seen this. I could not pass by and not get it."

"How far did you go?"

"About maybe twenty-five miles."

"She'll love it. It is so cool and unusual. I'll leave it wrapped. It is not as heavy as thought a sign would be."

"Thankfully."

"Well what I've got for you is not a present. Or dependingly?" Sue finishes in a lower pitch, "It is a piece of paper." She slides it over to him. "A list of things that need doing or checking."

"Thanks Sue. It is good, a sort of present. Before we get into that, are you swimming tonight?"

"Probably go to Kovenes."

"I want to swim too. If you don't mind I will be honest with the coach there, our Coach would want us to."

"What will you say?" Sue is not worried more curious if anything needs to be said.

"I'll just tell him we, I am, hoping a new club is starting next week and that I still need to swim before Blackpool, if he does not mind."

"Suppose he does need to be told we ain't swimming for them in Blackpool."

"The people there are really nice, I want to keep them sweet as we will see them again."

"Let you do the talking then Ives."

"People never say that to me." Ives picks up the list. He starts to read it as Melinda brings over their drinks and toast.

"The breads here are blasta; lots of seeds. Do you like seeds?"

"Ha ha, a good thing I do. Love them."

Ives is reading through the list, "Chinyll no."

"Okay, I'll quickly type your email now." Sue pulls her tablet out of her bag. "I'll ask Chinyll where are they up to with the contract and banners we are waiting on. And tell them we have celebrities?"

"Please Sue. From your list mention that about the flags, erm, if they want to have their name on the flags with, Rivertons Credit-Union and our Swimseye logo."

"Swimquisition logo Ives. I'll tell them to hurry up."

"Hats?"

"Oops, that is my fault. Not asked him yet."

"If you, you, do not want to it is fine. We could always see if

Chinyll want their names on the hats, then they can sort it all out."

"Ives, it is too much hassle to get Chinyll to arrange swim caps. Look how long the contract and banner has taken them. We are running out of time. I'll give Peter your logo and get him to put a little Chinyll and Riverton logo on. He can get Chinyll's logo from their internet site. Will write in the Chinyll email that we have sorted out the hats and ask for half the money and we'll send them the invoice."

"I'll pick up the plain swim caps from Super Sports, they are still reduced to a pound. Cheaper than anywhere on t'internet. We are getting through this list!" Sue is not as convinced or as rejoicing, "What is next?"

"Last. Last is filming and I have a a good idea about that. Similar to all your good ideas."

"I'm listening." Sue is typing as she says that.

"Filming is very important. You could film the Second Coming and if it is filmed without skill and talent - people would click off without even giving it a chance. It will need lots of different skills, underwater filming, sports shots, shots of the contestants looking puddled at quiz time. So I think it will make a great student film project, part of their coursework."

"Can see you have thought of this."

"I have, plus they will have better equipment." Sue remains nonchalant. With his vocal rhythm Ives tries to foment Sue, "Well the worst case scenario is I film it. I am pretty certain my sister left her underwater camera with my Mum, if not I'll ask her to post it. It is only the size of a normal camera." Sue looks up from her tablet,

"Lucky to have the Performing Arts College in our city. Hang on, isn't it right by your college." Ives nods 'yes' to Sue. "Well.."

"I'll run over there at dinner time."

"Is that the end of the list?"

"Yep." Ives passes it back to Sue as proof. "We are done, thanks Sue."

"Ives! Knew it was not going to be this quick. You have not mentioned the schedules."

"Where? Oh yes. Erm. Sorry. I have sort of done it though: I have got the letters ready and the dates to ask the celebrities to come, all from that algorithm we done." Ives has basically inhaled his

toast and savoured the roasted texture of every seed picked from his plate. The pot of water Melinda brought over is big. Ives fills his cup again. He is bored. He understands he cannot make a show without enduring tedious-organisations. Ives looks at Sue engrossed, typing on her tablet. His mind wanders to think about people who have spurned him through his identity, by saying swimming is boring. If anyone, not bittered by their lack of passion, will listen to Ives he will defend himself with a metaphor. In a Formula1 race the drivers do not get bored. People, settled on their skill level, driving the streets on complacent-autopilot, do. Indifferent to what the car is doing their bored mind wanders. Cannot get bored in a pool. It is sensory overload if anything. The feel of the bubbling water passing bare-skin in the most efficient way possible. Incorporated and innerved in a body with contracting and tensionless flexing muscles. Litres of air rushing into an inflating body, which is exploding in volume from the recoil of it purging it's contents back through a aerating nose. Ears in both worlds; dicotenous sounds, simultaneously hearing the melodic gurgling of the water and the crackling air. A one-metre deep choral tranquillity interludes at each turn. Three dimensional HD visualizations treat the swimmer to the sight of a few small bubbles dancing off a moving hand. The brain, using its plasticicy to to process the input and coordinate precise output, has no spare resources for conscious thought and definitely none for internal monologue. The overload of data sometimes is that great the brain engages the failsafe program to store superfluous data. A swimmer can be aware of their brain processing raw data when walking quietly, consciously assimilating the evaluations from the feeling of frontcrawl kicking earlier in the day. It is so intense, often the simple adjunct task of counting lengths fails. For now though, those neural pathways which have been forged at the onslaught of input physically ache in the redundancy. The svelte speciality of their design leaves no room for coping mechanisms to protect from prolonged inactivity. To keep alive, their random-firing fidgets and discomforts Ives. The best he can give them is fiddling and spinning the butter-knife Melinda carried over. "So that is all sorted and the confirmations for the celebrities can be sent off?" Ives is grateful to Sue. He assumes she must be as bored as him; only somehow not showing it. He nods his head up and down in confirmation whilst saying through a smile,

"No."

"What?"

"Ha ha, erm, they are all ready to go and I have backup dates for them all. The only small glitch is that we have not got enough celebs." Sue pauses to think. Ives starts talking again, "Unless you have any better ideas I am happy to leave it as not having enough celebs. When the star swimmers come and have a laugh, we ask them to get their swimming friends to come. Failing that we may have to ask them to come again. I have tried to keep the ones least likely to come back with themselves or friends in the middle." Sue is happy with Ives's sensible plan.

"That is the best way." Sue's mood is starting to shift to excited.

"The schedule I have done also includes the clubs from around the country. It asks them if they have any dates they cannot attend between September and November."

"Did not know that, but good, so the list is done now? Again?"

"Yes. Thanks Sue. I appreciate it."

"We are definitely filming two shows on one day?"

"Think so."

"So tomorrow, post all letters. There is no point waiting. Well-done Ives."

"Well-done Sue."

"Are the credit-union still definite?"

"As far as I know. They just want to be told when to come out. Because of my cousin I don't think they will drop out."

"Are we still going to be in the first one so we can use the prize as prizes for other people?"

"Yep."

"You know you cannot be in it?" Ives is not happy to hear that.

"WHY?"

"It will look sooooo fixed. The organiser winning."

"But noooo! Why the swimming gone? I have loved..." Sue laughs sympathetically at Ives being dramatic then empties her teapot into her cup. Still restless, with a red pen Ives is sneakily drawing tiny smiley faces on Sue's apprenticeship papers. He looks at her, "I have just had an idea! At the end, when the, like, you know the erm the credits at the end, the camera flips to the contestants having fun, each one saying why they love swimming, or they can say why, 'we love swimming or I love swimming because...' Everyone's will be different and it will encourage people to swim. So people

could say 'I love swimming because racing.' or 'because it is like flying'."

"Ha, that is a good idea!"

"What will be yours Sue?"

"I'll have a moment. What is yours?"

"Err, don't skit me, I think I'd say, it is because I feel like, a, it is like I am, don't laugh, elegantly making beauty." Ives insecurely confesses. Nevertheless he continues, "Talented musicians add beauty to the world through their guitars or voices. I cannot talk never mind sing. When you watch ballet-dancers being artistic and elegant, that is what I feel like I am doing - performing a cool but beautiful dance in the water." Sue is giggling inoffensively.

"You will need a shorter way to say that at the end of the show."

"You are right. I would. I've got two months to think about it."

Ives suggests, "because it is ballet?" He then answers his own preposition, "No, that sounds not too good."

"GOT IT! You love swimming because," Sue pauses for effect, "Because you are camp dot-hom. Haha."

"It is not... Okay it did sound a little gay, but I'm not—" Sue interrupts,

"Just joking. Lots of people maybe the same. ABOUT SWIMMING!" Sue correcting herself. "- Not of being camp! The same feelings over the beauty of swimming. Being two-faced they don't admit it."

"So come-on what would yours be Sue?"

"I love swimming because of the team." Ives nods in agreement. "We have all ended up so close to everyone. Firstly we all see each other with nearly no clothes on, or sometimes by mistake with no clothes on. We have all accidentally been kicked and touched each other in our-places whilst swimming." Ives laughs his Frank Bruno type laugh. "But it is not because of that, we see each other at our best and worst. We see each other full of energy. We see each other nearly dead lying by the side of the pool on the deflated bouncy castle." They both laugh saying, ""JIMMY."" "There are no masks or deceits, we know when we have won or lost, happy or sad. And then, we support each other."

"That was beautiful Sue. I'd say I've got a tear in my eye Sue, but you'd say I'm molly again. But that was a moving sentiment and true."

"It will be interesting what the contestants say."

"And even the celebrities." They both casually fade-out deep in

thought until Sue observes,

"It is six now. Thought we will be longer. What do you want to do. Picking Daisy up at seven from dance. Dropping her home then going to Kovenes swim. If you want to wait around here somewhere whilst she is picked her up I can take you the pool."

"Isn't Daisy going with you?"

"She does not want to tonight."

"And you are not seeing Steve before?"

"No he is in work until ten."

"Well if you don't mind. Have you done all your coursework? And what time do you leave to pick her up?"

"Yeah and quarter to seven."

"I don't, well, I don't fancy sitting here until you go though. What would you normally do?"

"Still not hundred percent with the change in schedule. Would try to do some exercises."

"Do you want a game of tennis."

"Tennis?"

"Tennis in the subway before the tunnel?"

"No. We'll go for a walk and or run, to those exercise machines in the park over there. I haven't got any bats anyway."

"Okay. Can I leave my bike in yours please?"

"Yeah, 'course."

That evening, they have their exercises. Ives stays at the exercise machines whilst Sue picks up Daisy in her two seater then swapping her for Ives. They get to the pool in plenty of time. They chatted to the Kovenes Coach who said they could swim any time with him. They put every ounce of energy in their bodies into their muscles as they can feel the Blackpool trepidations. After thanking the Kovenes Coach and hearing him commend their abilities they leave without a fuss. They are not sure who they will see the remainder of the week. Sue pops into the bookmakers where Steve is working until ten. She says a zesty hasty hello to him. Ives went in with her, but then left them to it. Sue comes out merrily singing to herself.

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Media Singing

As promised to Sue, at dinner time Ives jogs himself along the road to the performing arts college. It is a strange building. To Ives it has the feel of going into a business office block. There is a receptionist. He has second thoughts. He pushes through his doubt, only because he needs to. Looking to see if there are any alternatives to the receptionist to accost he cannot see any students; there was not any outside either. He turns to the receptionist who is semi-watching him.

"Hi." Ives says.

"How can I help you?" The receptionist recites. Ives says nothing. He cannot think of the words he wants to use. The receptionist looks at his face. It probably looks like it would when he is sitting on the toilet. In what, for both of them, felt an afternoon Ives finally speaks,

"Could I, is it possible to speak to please a tutor who is in charge of, erm, visual, videography courses please?" The receptionist electrically thinks. Ives can see from her countenance she is trying to be helpful.

"Oh quick, if you speak to David there just leaving, he can help you."

"Thank you." Ives says making eye contact with her and smiling. Ives glances at the striding man with an ugly briefcase and newspaper in his left hand, opening the door with his right. Ives can see just from his movements he does not look like an amicable man. Yet he keeps on keeping on. "Excuse me David?" David looks up at him without the friendly change in facial expressions that most humans show to each other. He does not even stop walking. "The receptionist suggested that I speak to you regarding a coursework project for your students, documenting a community project I am involved in."

"Documenting a community project. What sort of community project?"

"Quizzes and sporting events."

"No. You can ask the students individually but I cannot make it part of our curriculum."

"You don't understand what I mean, I think mainly because you don't want to..." David was about to interrupt. Ives did not raise his voice, but his swimming has given him the lungs to have a

heldentenor aspect to his voice he can sometimes figure out to control. David's words are stopped in his throat by Ives's powerful "But that," Ives's voice goes back to what he sees as his normal voice, "does not matter; I don't think working with your type would work out. Enjoy your dinner."

"You too." David says coldly and annoyed. David angrily wants to lash out but he decided that Gina the receptionist will be an easier target on his return. Ives stops still, leaving David to walk off. He decides to try the university. That is what he wanted all along. Grateful that his encounter with David did not waste more than two minutes. He runs down the steep hill that has a three laned, thirty miles per hour dual carriage way that runs to the tunnels in or out of the city centre. Running down the hill, from his knowledge of this university, he recalls it is split into many different buildings within this general area of the city. He turns left and has to climb go up some stairs to get to the granite building. Ives enjoyed the exertion. He takes a couple of breaths and walks inside.

There is no receptionist only a dark flight of stairs. He notices a small plaque on the wall outlining the different floors. Nothing he could make any sense of. He runs ten metres to the building next door. On the front a golden sign states 'media studies and performing arts.' Happy for his bit of luck, he finds the floor plan. Film studies is what he goes for on the third floor. Up the stairs Ives runs. He turns into the corridor thinking it is strange anyone could walk into the building with no checks. The first students he has come across,

"Excuse me, do you know who is in charge of the film studies courses please." The students smile, the two males and one female, all clutching folders look at each other.

"Professor Arnold." They agree.

"Thanks. Is his office...?"

"It is down there on the left." The female helpfully points out.

"You are in luck. I have just seen him go in." The taller male on Ives's left says.

"Thanks, is he nice?" The three laugh.

"Yes." The female students reassures Ives. "He has helped me a lot."

"Thank you very much. Sorry to have interrupted you."

"Oh it is no bother." The same male says.

"Good luck." The girl playfully says as they are walking off.

Ives sees the name plate on the door. He knocks.

"Come in." He hears. Ives pushes the heavy door. Professor Arnold looks at Ives doubtlessly trying to place him as one of his students. Ives was glad of the practise with David. "What can I do you for?"

"Hi my name is Ives. I'm from, err, I'm from the Community College. Could I speak to you please about combining a local-community project with possibly one of your coursework projects?"

"Intriguing. Yes, fire away, but you don't mind if I eat whilst listening intently?" The Professor has a home-made sandwich placed onto a florally decorated ceramic plate. His office walls are lined with books from floor to ceiling. His desk smothered with lots of papers and a briefcase, cleared to leave space for his dinner. Ives smiles at the Professor's light heartedness. "Have you eaten?"

"Arh no, I am fine thanks." Ives was hungry but in no way going to take one of the Professor's sandwiches off him.

"Okay, a community project, fire away." Professor Arnold's comfort around people made Ives fully at ease. The excited and childlike way the Professor holds his sandwich made Ives admire his quirkiness.

"We have organised a weekly contest. Teams of four from inner-city swim clubs will come and compete in a joint quiz and swimming competition. We have had small prizes donated of vouchers—"

"Sorry, did you say swimming?"

"Yes. Joint swimming and knowledge quiz."

"Sorry again, is it...?"

"Erm like Bullseye but with swimming."

"Arrh, sorry, it has been a long morning. I get you now. I am even more intrigued, please-please carry on."

"Thanks. Erm, the final each week is a head-to-head against a celebrity swimmer. We have somehow managed to get Mark Foster, Rebecca Adlington and other Olympian and Para-Olympians."

"They are famous, you have done well."

"Thanks. Plenty of luck was involved. So filming, yes, these swimmers from the various swim clubs all around the country are going to put tremendous effort and skill into their swims. Plus with the swim stars coming we think it is, erm, un – unjust for only a few people to witness this. We can document it ourselves, but being amateurs we will lose so much of the magic and special moments. I know people learning how to film need projects. I thought instead of

them scratching their heads thinking what to film for their coursework this maybe an ideal project. It will unite lots of different aspects, from capturing emotions in the quiz to the beauty of the swimming. Even underwater shots?"

"Thank you, for your very passionate description. When you say we?"

"The swimmers from my swim club."

"Sorry to ask but what sort of prizes have you been donated."

"Err, for the winners fifty-pounds worth of shop-vouchers from and for an online sport shop. Only got signed photographs and stickers for the runner-ups. It is possible we may also be getting the credit-union my cousin works in to donate a bit of money, again hopefully fifty pound each for the winners."

"I stand by what I say, you and your friends have done an excellent job. When are you planning on starting?"

"September through to November."

"I was checking. If I keenly push some of my students into this, I did not want it to be last minute." At this hint of participation, Professor Arnold could not fail to be dazzled by Ives's smile. "What about post-production?"

"That is up to you. Mainly though it will be editing and sequencing from the different cameras." Ives says to hoping to sound like he has done his research.

"How long will the finished show be?"

"Forty-five minutes."

"How many of these?"

"We are aiming for twenty. Two shot back to back each week."

"That can be a lot of time spent editing."

"I would rather it be a filming project than editing, as I could imagine a student would want to exhibit their editing skills and so spend months on one show."

"Hence very simple editing. It seems like you have given this a lot of thought." Ives had not.

"I am just trying to put myself in their position."

"You know from the day of shooting it may not be until the successive July that they are all ready." Ives is shocked. He does not want to argue with the Professor as he has been extremely welcoming to him. Not sure what to say,

"I was, err, I was hoping it would be less, a lot less. Also the students would not want to spend a year working on the same project, would they? Even with the best will in the world it would become

same-old same-old for them. Would not everyone prefer the editing to be a simple case of concatenating the shots. Done in an evening?"

Ives was using his computer terms hoping they applied to filming.

"The editing maybe trail and error at first. It will also depend on the personal concept-realisation of the students involved. We normally let our students decide either to do a project each semester or an extended one through the whole year. I can see it working. I have the right people in mind who will be very keen."

"Thank you."

"I will have a powwow with them, regarding the longevity of the project, then we will need to talk some more, about things like ownership and release forms being signed by everyone being filmed. What channels are you going to use?"

"Our own website and Vimeo, possibly YouTube."

"You have come at exactly the right time. I am away tomorrow for three weeks; the students who have passed this year are away. Then when everyone is back they will be in the process of choosing their projects. These will be second year students, they are a talented bunch. Will I be okay to email you and then meet favourably the second day I am back?"

"Yes. Thank you."

"I'll get your email address from you then I am going to make myself a drink. And drink it in the copier room. It is the glamorous location all the staff meet up and talk. Here type it in that please good sir." The Professor hands Ives a tablet. Ives types his address in carefully. "I'll send that and make sure it is correct and does not bounce back. If you have not heard from me I'm here today and then you could always catch me back here in three weeks. I am sure that has gone through, must have. Is your phone email?" Ives shakes his head apologetically. "Good luck sorting out the rest of the details and I'll send you a proper email over the next couple of days."

"Thank you."

"This is one of those rare occasions where two parties can gain by helping each other out."

"Mutual symbiosis."

"What are you studying?"

"A Levels. Thanks again and enjoy your holiday."

"Thank you Ives."

Ives happily runs up the hill back to college. Blissfully ignoring his worries that he still has not done the website yet.

The whole of that week Matt, Sue and Ives swam in Kovenes in the evenings. Jimmy went with them once on Wednesday. Katherine, although Sue offered to pick her up, done her own programme, mainly swimming in the dock except for tonight, Thursday as she when wanted to swim in Coynus Cads. It was not a happy swim for Katherine as allied to what happened with Ives she was in the lane alone with kids. The kids did not enjoy get told off by her either. In the mornings Sue substituted her swim for runs. Ives rode his bike and Matt popped into the gym to use the rowing machines.

Not sure if their disrupted training has left them under-prepared they talk. They are in the deep-end of Kovenes pool. Ives is standing, Sue is holding onto the ridge in the freeboard-wall and Matt is holding the rope. They all went to Kovenes pool to swim even though the club are never there on Thursday nights. They met at seven. The late nights swimming at Kovenes club has not appealed to any of them. Tuesday and Wednesdays Sue stayed in work an extra hour having a sleep in one of the offices. Matt would go home and sleep for one and a half hours. Monday, Wednesday and today, Thursday, Ives instead of his active dinner hour covertly locked himself in a classroom and slept.

"Who's swimming tomorrow night?" Sue asks Matt and Ives.

"We are up and out at quarter past six Saturday morning. I'm not swimming."

"I am not planning to either." Matt says and pats Ives on his shoulder.

"I'll have a monster dry-land train tomorrow morning." Matt pats Ives on his shoulder again to show he has similar plans.

"Okay you two, lifts?"

"Coach texted me and said there are two spaces with Peter, Eliza's Dad. If you want to Matt?" Sue speaks before Matt,

"If no-one minds I'll take Catwalk in my car then?"

"No Daisystar?" Matt asks Sue.

"She is staying at our granddad's."

"It is going to be twenty percent less cool without her."

"What does she call you Sue?" Ives has not totally forgot. With elfishness he wants to talk about it.

"'Oops.' I do not know why. It's kind of cute. One time, had to not breath the side she was on as I could see her and even hear her. Making me laugh, it nearly drowned me." Ives continues,

"Ha ha, did you notice she had the whole audience singing, well screaming, 'I say Oops is in the lead, I say oops is in the lead.' To that DJ Casper Oops Upside Your Head song?

[<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GEdfMv-IWjo>]"

"Yeah." Sue reports, displeased.

"And doing the dance. The DJ Casper dance." Matt adds. Then he could not help himself, he leans to his left and slaps the water, singing

"I say Oops is in the lead." He leans to his right and slaps the water with his left hand. Ives joins in. 'I say Oops is in the lead.' They wave straight arms two times to the side. "Move forward." Sue is looking uncomfortable. She decides,

"Less embarrassing if I join in." "Move back. Move forward. Move Back." Matt is able to recite more accurately than the others,

"Come on everybody. Swim that thing. Swim that thing." They dance a swimming action. "Oops sure don't feel no pain. Come on everybody. Swim that thing. Swim that thing. Oops sure don't feel no pain"

They all join the chorus "I say Oops is in the lead, I say oops is in the lead. – Haarrrr." They wind down.

"Can you not get her to come?" Matt pleads. Sue still grinning,

"No, she does need the time away with our granddad. Anyway, what was I saying?"

"Oops—"

"NO!" Sue stops Ives who was playfully tormenting her. "I'm taking Katherine, you are going with Peter, are you Matt?"

"I will tag along."

"So that leaves Jimmy?" Sue's concern is alleviate by Ives,

"He is going with Coach in someone's car."

"So that is all sorted?"

"What time buddy?"

"Coach said leaving the sports centre at half six at the latest, in the morning. What are you doing Sue, are you meeting us all at Criffud?"

"No. Katherine lives close to the centre. She has good taste in music. Tunes up, foot down and see you losers there." Matt quietly asks,

"What are you women doing regarding the matter of staying overnight?"

"Katherine is up for it. I am."

"Ives?"

"Probably, I'll play it by ear. Are we just going to roam the arcades and beach all night?"

"Blackpool is only once a year buddy. Rock, beaches, babes, arcade, trams, tower and swimming!"

"Okay, but if I need a couple of hours, I can check my eyelids in Sue's car?"

"Or on the beach." Sue confirms, "And you are all okay for lifts BACK on Sunday if you all stay over, even Jimmy?" Matt answers,

"Jimmy must be okay to get back on Sunday: it was all his idea; just realised though that bugger is not swimming. His five K is next week."

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Blackpool e01

Getting there early was a good idea with little downside as the swimmers are all accustomed to early mornings. Coach thinks it is important for all of them to get a feel for the pool before they compete. There are still public in the pool, which they are due to close off at nine ready for the competition at ten. In the far side of the pool, away from the showers, three lanes are set out with two swimmers in each, ambling up and down. Kids and their parents are playing in the remainder of the pool. Coach walking down his column of swimmers shepherds them to the centremost lane. He looks apologetically to the two public swimmers in there, an approximately forty year old female doing an occasional length of front crawl and a man with a moustache swimming breaststroke without goggles. Jimmy tells the young ones which direction to swim in. Coach says, "A slow swim! You are getting acquainted with the wall and any subtle markings." Although pools are supposed to be uniform, they are not. The 'T' shape at the end of the line indicates to the swimmer they are two metres from the wall. This is not always accurate and for highly-tuned swimmers a couple of centimetres can be a perceivable difference. Some pool builders even get confused if the top of the 'T' is included in the two-metre measurement. That is only a small blunder compared to Coynus Cad's nearest fifty-metre pool, well to be exact: an imbecilic forty-nine and a quarter metre pool. Also it is only the first two lanes that are regulation width. Somehow the rest are far too narrow, even too narrow for the public who forevermore injure themselves being forced to swim so near the ropes they catch their fingers. Lee, who swims there, finds the narrow lanes a hindrance.

Sue and Katherine were last to arrive.

"What does it taste like Matt?" Sue ebulliently announcing her and Katherine's presence. Katherine dives in and swims down the lane. "Hey champ! It tastes like victory! And a bit like Picton." The two public swimmers have already skulked over to the other lanes. Matt was hovering in the deep-end as he was sipping from his drink. Sue steps in with no foretoken. A decent sized dollop of her splash enters Matt's wide open bottle, replacing the tap-water he had just

drank. He sees the funny-side. Sue gives Matt a hug. With the lane being so bedlamic, everyone is pausing at each end. One by one Sue hugs her friends then lets them swim by. Speaking to Matt, Sue enquires,

"So, how are you feeling champ?"

"I am not. I'm neither nervous nor nonchalant. I am focused, you know how it is. How about you champ?"

"A few butter-fish. That is good, I hope. A sign of extra energy."

"Catwalk?" Matt wondered.

"She does seem a bit frightened dot-vom. Ives?"

"Ha ha, I prefigure foremost his concern is with staying awake tonight."

"Yeah our swims are late."

"No I mean staying out tonight."

"Oh, the big puff. Ha ha."

"Now only do your turns for the races you are doing!" Coach spiting as he stipulates at the top of his voice. "Except fly, only fly quarter lengths! I don't want anyone tiring themselves out!"

"Looking on form champ!" Matt rapidly comments to Katherine as she pauses to check she has a clear swim. Coach guides them all through the acclimatisation swim. Getting his team out of the water after forty minutes at ten-to-nine. The pool staff are already starting to get the pool prepared. As each swimmer passes, Coach looks at his clipboard and suggests what time they are best to eat. The first batch of swimmers have already eaten. Jimmy was a great help to Coach and the swimmers making sure they all are certain of what they are doing and, when and where they should be.

After most people are dried and changed, Sue is walking to where she expects Coach to be. She is wanting to ask him is there anything he needs before they settle into the spectator's area and cheer their younger swimmers. Coming out of the female shower areas, now clothed she sees two Coyus Cads with their yellow Bridgert caps on. About to say hello and wish luck to the eight and nine year old girls who will be some of the first to swim, she notices what is happening with two boys. The boys are older and bigger she guesses they must be about fourteen with accents she cannot place.

"Justine, Sophie go. Good luck with your race I'll deal with this."

Sue turns her reassuring smiling at the shy girls who begin to slowly stride over to the starting area. One of the lads begins to

speak in a sarcastic tone. Sue turns to the swaggering lad, her pointing finger deliberately catching his face as she turns, "You have a choice. Listen! You can either go up to the girls and apologise, saying the only reason you were bitching over their costume is you were jealous. Jealous she can choose things that suit her." Sue leans on his shoulder, he is just wearing jammers and has a mature muscle structure of a man, a short man, "Or can drag you and your mate into the pool and we'll see who comes up alive." The lads are shocked at being spoken to like this but due to bravado laugh defiantly at the female. Sue reaches to grab their hair in each hand but she hears a voice to her left,

"Is there a problem here?" She weighs up the man.

"Are you their Dad?"

"No, I'm, his Dad is there." The man points to a man with his back turned, standing in the crowd with a coaching type navy-blue tracksuit bottoms and matching polo-neck T-shirt.

"Get him." Sue commanded the man and then turns to the smaller lad,

"And where is your Dad?" The lad hesitates. Sue turns to see the father look over and begin to approach, "Forget it, you can go." The shorter lad hesitates to do anything. Sue glares at him, he slowly walks to the man who fetched the father who directs him to the crowd. In the mean time Justine and Sophie could see Jimmy, Matt and Ives in their jammers near the starting blocks where Coach last was. They were helping to wedge the wobbly block that their first swimmer was due to start from. They are using the opportunity to dive from the block and also do backstroke starts dispersing some of their nerves. Jimmy with him not competing wants to somehow be involved in the water. Matt is grilling Ives,

"Who were those girls you were talking to down there?"

"Two Russian sisters. Both fifty-metre frontcrawlers. Expected to win." Ives tells Matt proud of himself.

"So you were trying to pull a fast one?" The speed of Matt's wit makes Ives smile. "Did you swap names?"

"It blue-screened. The younger-one totally got the wrong end of the bargepole. She thought I was coming on to her. Ruined it. She was like still her Grandparents."

"Russian —" Matt had another gag but does not get the second word out. Their attention is drawn to the two starkly concerned little girls who have approached them,

"Sue is in an argument." Younger Sophie tells them,

"By the showers." Justine adds. Instantly they stop, look over, Matt climbs out the water, Ives and Jimmy were leaning over the block.

"Thanks" Ives tells the girls. "Stay here." They jog over able to see but not hear things developing.

"What the hell is going on?" The father extremely aggressively barks at Sue.

"Your son is nastily bullying young girls." Sue informs him, unperturbed by the father's intimidation tactics. However, just as the son did all the father does is laugh defiantly. Sue asserts, "Either you discipline him, or I discipline you."

"I don't know wh—" The father is still unconcerned about Sue's accusations so she cuts in,

"You don't want your son to see what is going to happen next. Tell him to leave."

"Go son." The lad is about to protest at being told to go but the fetcher man pulled him and pointed for him to go to the crowd to the sound of Sue stating,

"I hate bullies. Especially ones who pick on little girls!" The fetcher-man stayed. Sue is about to reiterate her previous demand but this time the father speaks over her voice, bolstered by the other man and himself outnumbering her,

"Now listen you bitch—" Sue heard enough. Sue reaches up. Sue is five-foot ten, the father about six-foot two. The height difference is no obstacle to yank his black hair pulling him down towards the water. Before the fetcher man had the reflexes to act in that one movement Sue is two metres, halfway, to the pool. The fetcher-man grapples Sue violently around her neck, lifting her off her feet. Sue pivots the best she could to elbow her captor around his head. Ives, Matt and Jimmy breaking the pool rules have started to sprint the last fifteen metres. The elbow to his jaw loosens his grip enough for Sue to lower her head to see the father lining up a kick to Sue. Sue's quickly flicks her foot striking the father in his genitals. One second before Sue's friends arrive a third man snatches Sue's arm. The fetcher man had fully let go; with his head ringing from the elbow strike, he pulls back his fist, Sue is needing to kick the father again as he is still trying to kick her, as a consequence Sue's head is lined up perfectly for the fetcher-man to punch her. About to release his cocked-punch, Jimmy, Matt and Ives arrive. Ives grabs the fetcher man in mid-punch running him to the wall. Matt does the same to the father.

"It is over!" Ives shouts at fetcher man who his trying to break free. Neither Ives or Matt are hurting them, benignly pinning them against the wall. Jimmy with his back to all this and to Sue has his arms widened, a nod off each other signals the third man is happy to leave it. The two pinned next to each other against the wall did not agree with Ives's statement telling them it is over. Simultaneously the fetcher man swings his fist at Ives's head whilst the father with his penchant for kicking sneakily kicks Matt in his shin. It did not hurt Matt but distracted him enough for the father to break away from Matt's pinning hold. Meanwhile Ives ducks and raises his left forearm that he was using to pin the man against the wall, this deflects the fist which was flying towards Ives's nose. Ives's right hand already being low shapes into a fist as Ives uses the power of his hips and triceps to punch this fetcher man squarely in his chest. Ives hears the wind come out of the man and also feels his weight against his left forearm as the man tries to lean forward in pain. Matt spinning around could not grab the Father. Luckily Jimmy had turned seeing the Father, finally using his hands, about to hit Sue with a large drawn back punch. Jimmy steps, is able to make contact with the father's head with a light left-jab, which did not hurt him in anyway but disrupted his attack on Sue. Before the father could look to see what had hit him he hears ringing in his ears suddenly feeling himself on the floor. Jimmy's jab was a fast one-two combo; a whack from his right hand knocking the father to the floor. Quickly Jimmy turns to check the third man is not about to attack. They look at each other, again Jimmy widens and turns his waist-high palms out towards the man. Again the man nods, who can also see Matt grabbing Sue and starting to lead her away. Ives eases the fetcher man down to sit on the floor. All four walk off. They head back to the corner of the pool by the blocks.

The silence is broken by Matt asking, "Is everyone okay?" They all nod and hum a yes sound. "Is my hair okay?" They grin. Matt turns around to where the clash took place. The Father who Jimmy whacked is still prostrate on the floor. The fetcher man remaining sitting down slumped. Sue tells Ives, Jimmy and Matt how it all started, emphasising the fact of the lads making fun of sweet and innocent Justine and Sophie. Matt continuing to worry is about to say something; he turns again, relieved to see the Father standing himself up with assistance from the others including

the fetcher man.

The friends still shook-up get to the corner where some of their club have congregated. Sophie and Justine are now in a group of five. Ives calls the two over, he quietly stoops down and says to them,

"Sue done the right thing standing up for her friends. You done the right thing walking away and then telling us Sue was in an argument. Then though, I know what happened, but violence is never the answer. We tried to use it as little as possible. If we were better people we would have turned the other cheek."

"Yeah it was me who got too angry at him." Sue gently admits. "Ives is right it was me who did something wrong. You should be proud of yourselves. And take no notice over what they were saying: bullies want to pick on people." Jimmy, speaking as softly as he is able, adds to Sue's comments,

"No matter what you clobber you had on they would have made a nasty comment my lovely. If you had plain black they would have called it boring. If it was brand new they'd be sneering jibes like you need a new one to win." Jimmy's awkward and unpractised soft speech and expressions combined with nerves make the two girls giggle. "So take no notice of their comments they mean nothing. Except they are full of evil sh.., hate, full of hate and would say anything to anyone littler than them." Sue nods. Sophie especially feels upset though. Walking back to her friends with Justine, Sophie privately and guiltily wishes she had not come to Blackpool or had not chosen her brightly coloured suit those years ago. Everybody feels for her. Matt has been looking over and the two men are up and about going about their business.

"Thanks Jimmy that was so sweet of you saying that to the girls."

"Thankfuckingly I remembered not to swear, HA HA. I nearly swore."

"You were kind. Buddy."

They see Coach approach.

"What has happened?" Ives is the closest. He privately whispers, "Justine and Sophie, and Sophie, are really upset by a bully, we'll just have to take her mind off it and, err I'll let Sue tell you the rest." Sue tells Coach who is disappointed and worried about any repercussions. Coach now laboured to get everyone refocussed on the swimming.

Sue and her three friends sit in their own group to regroup.

"Where is Catwalk?" Ives wonders. Nobody knows.

"I'd say lad, she's still waiting for us in the stands." Jimmy guessed. "We'll go there soon, we'll just make sure Coach is sound when he has finished preparing the kids."

"She is safe Ives. Can see all them bullies over there. So she is perfectly fine and she knows where to find us. We can go over now."

Sue stands from the poolside floor and hugs a sitting Matt, then Jimmy and Ives, whilst telling them, "Thank you for coming to check on me. You are good friends."

"Thank you for standing up for Justine and Sophie. Poor things."

"They'll feel sat on now. I hate bullies." Jimmy sharing from his heartfelt thoughts.

"Just no more starting fights Sue." Matt says through a smile. In a high pitched tone,

"Did you slap him Jimmy?" What Sue thought she had seen was confusing her.

"Yes."

"Why?" Sue wanted him to expand his answer. She sits back down in preparation. Ives and Matt are listening curiously.

"I have seen my toddler kid brothers and sisters fight. They never ever punch. Neither do monkeys on the TV like. Instead they swing their open hands like swatting wasps. Yeah, punching is a tool we have, but small kids also use a thump. And old people. My Granddad was always threatening to thump me one. Us thick adults we have our heads stuck with just one tool - a punch. Because a punch looks hard and damages to the max. That aggression is deep within our western culture. Punching also hurts your hand." They are all laughing somewhat impressed,

"So you just slapped him to the ground." Sue sums up.

"Having swimming muscles help. The bag-head will be stunned, but standing up after a bit like, without any broken bones. It's not inbuilt in us to permanently maim people. As you can see same as in the wild, I made my point and walked away." They laugh some more.

The group turn to see if Coach has finished so they can go and find Katherine in the viewing stands. Instead they see two men approaching Coach. Their stomachs turn. The men walk close to Coach but carry on towards them. Coach sees that as his cue to follow

them. The man with a blue T-shirt with embroidery of various logos and lots of lanyards with numerous cards and whistles around his neck speaks to the four who are sitting on the floor. Thirty metres behind they notice Katherine walking over to them.

"Are you the group that was involved in the incident?" The four slowly stand. Sue says a quiet and uncommitted, "Yeah."

"First is everyone okay?" Again no-one is keen to speak up. "Well does anybody want me to arrange any medical treatment?" He observes them all shake their heads and Sue mumbles, "No."

"I have spoken to the gentlemen involved and none of them want any action taken. Are you in the same position?" As it was Sue was who was mostly in the thick of it they look at Sue to answer,

"Yes; I have made my view on cruel bullying very clear."

"Bullying?" The man without as many lanyards asks Sue. Sue is annoyed these two men have not been told the full story.

"Exactly like his Father, it all started as his son was bullying two shy nine year old girls because their costumes were not the newest or coloured the way he likes. The people in charge have let all the children down by allowing bullying." The many lanyarded-man says,

"I am part of the team who organise these events and we take a serious stance on bullying I can assure you. If anyone would like to make a complaint?" Sue keeps quiet. With patience, "Who were these girls that were bullied? Will they make a compliant?"

"For them it is over now. They don't need a scary man speaking to them. They have been upset enough."

"And for you?" The official asks Sue.

"Will still like to see the two horrors apologise to them and if I ever see them picking on anyone again - from then on their life will change in a bad way. You too will have to explain to the ASA the article that will be written. These children are under your care and you have let them all down." Jimmy, Ives and Matt are standing silent in awe of Sue's passionate stance against bullying and defence of two of their team-mates. Coach is impressed how Sue can speak without fear to the man he knows to be high up in the swimming world as if he a naughty schoolboy. The man with less lanyards eventually identifies himself,

"I am their Coach and I know who was involved. Leave it with me." The many lanyard man resumes,

"We can only address bullying if people make complaints about it. Can you speak for the two girls who were involved that they do not want to make an allegation?" The official turns to overpowered-Coach Mint for confirmation. Sue speaks anyway,

"You are wrong. If you ever bothered to learn how to read you would know that bullying often leads the victims too lacking in confidence or intimidated to speak out. Waiting for people to complain is incompetent: you need to be proactive not reactive. And you need to be ashamed of yourself and better at your job or give it to someone less dangerous. So yeah, you can take it they do not want to make an official complaint. If things change you will be the first to know." It is unmistakeable now that the official wants to get the last word,

"From what I have heard it seems like everybody's conduct was inexcusably egregious. You should all consider yourselves lucky not only that no police are involved but that no-one has been barred from competition." Sue lets him have the last word. As the two walk off Coach smiles with a closed mouth to Sue. His nerves and heart are glad Sue kept her cool.

"You are an extraordinary women." Matt says to Sue. Coach heads to his athletes. After looking at his clipboard again, taking deep breaths he quietens the murmurs. Then asks,

"Whoever is not swimming in the first round go with Eliza's dad to the stands please and lets put it all behind us." Turning around to walk to the spectator-area they all see the two fourteen year-old lads being frogmarched by their Coach. Coach Mint ushers those not swimming to keep going. Under the supervision of their Coach, and Sue who walked over, the bigger lad approaches Justine and Sophie and says,

"Sorry for what we said. We did not mean it. You looked like good swimmers so we were trying to distract you so our swimmers would do better." To the older ones the statement seemed contrived. Nevertheless it was far better than they expected. Now the adults hoped Sophie and Justine may actually get a boost from their compliments, be less upset and so even swim to their potential.

Not forthcoming where she has been, Ives catches Katherine up on the events as they follow their team-mates to the spectator area. The spectator area is the shape of a question mark. Looking from the entrance with your back to showers, the curved tip begins in the

centre of the shallow end to your left. The straight edge runs parallel to the far length of the pool, stopping two-thirds of the way. The entrance to terraces is the tip of the curve. They have set their territory in the centre of the curve three-quarters of the way up.

Justine is the very first to race. Justine is tall for her age, the faction look at each other conveying their confidence in her chances. Matt speaks loudly to Sue,

"I have my phone and my speakers, I have got this. Ready? Pass that down to Ives and that to Neil. Tell them to take care of them." Sue passes the round tennis ball sized plastic black things, one to her left and one to the right repeating Matt's commands. All of a sudden, they hear a thump and a thump, then a violin.

[<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oc-P8oDuS0Q> Dexys Midnight Runners] Matt bellows out in time, "Come on Justine." It is the 'Come on Eileen song'. More violins, then another "'Come on Justine!'" Where they can they sing along and then all scream 'Justine' in place of 'Eileen'. Justine is delighted. Matt serendipitously timed it well to finish as the swimmers were about to step onto the blocks with smirking Justine ready to dive in for her twenty-five metre breaststroke. Their group, especially the younger ones were delighted with Matt's plan. It was Katherine, who Matt was quietly in cahoots with throughout the week who choose the majority of the songs. Justine easily won. She hung around blocks as she had her fifty breaststroke soon.

Michael Starr was up next. Swimming to 'Shooting Star' by BANG [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=221c0x6R2rw> (Hixxy remix)] he came a close second. Then Sophie. If anyone was going to win today everybody now wanted it to be Sophie. Sophie took pleasure in her song of, 'Aha - Take on Me'. Where they shouted 'Phee' (what her friends call her) in place of 'Me'. In her backstroke fifty Sophie's turn was technically perfect. Backstroke turns are probably the hardest to master. The swimmer has to gauge from looking up at the flags when to roll onto their front, keep their momentum and plying the one arm pull to both maintain forward-speed and to flip one-hundred and eighty degrees, to push off the wall on their backs. In addition, whilst dolphining underwater on their backs, they need to have enough air in their lungs to push a constant stream of air out

of their nose. This breathing out prevents water travelling up their nose and hindering their breathing. Everyone was keen to tell Sophie how perfect her swim was, she won by many kid-sized body lengths. Importantly she seemed happy and proud of herself in to contrast earlier how her spirit had been cowed by the bullies.

Much later Katherine is visibly drooped climbing onto the blocks. Through nerves she, following Ives's pattern, felt frequent urges to go to the toilet, lots. Hovering around her block, with the competitors beginning to converge, she hears a 'whup' sound coming from the stands. With no idea what she is going to hear next she cringes. [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YFmsgHfuXpA>] After another 'whup' she hears Richard Fairbrass's voice through Matt's speakers singing, 'I'm too sexy for my car, too sexy for my car. Too sexy by far. I'm too sexy for my hat, too sexy for my hat. What do you think about that.' The drums kick in, then so do the voices of her friends singing along,

““I'm a model. You know what I mean and I do my little turn on the catwalk yeah on the catwalk.”” To the bemusement of her competitors, full of nerves but caught up in the tune Katherine acts out the lyrics briefly 'shaking my little tush' before the percussion kicks in. She then settles down focussing on her task. The Coach of the swimmer in lane two does not settle gracefully, to the cheering of the spectators he takes off dancing where Katherine ceased. Despite witnessing some atrocious dancing Katherine swam tough. Never giving up on her sixteen length swim. Her strong mind and sheer determination propelled her to out-touch the county swimmer two lanes away for first place. Climbing out of the pool Katherine's demeanour had transformed with her success. What made the victory even more significant to her was that she sees herself now as an Aquathlonist.

Matt's fifty-metre frontcrawl is seen by most as the monarch of events. As Matt was going to prepare for his race he gave Jimmy instructions how to use his phone and speakers, whose power had been topped up courtesy of Sue's car. Jimmy's choice of songs were not good. For the young Philip preceding Matt, inexplicably Jimmy played 'Nina Simone - Sinnerman [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bn5tiuZU4JI>]. For Matt, Jimmy chose a truly idiosyncratic song, an odd song from Youtube. Through Jimmy's phone he played the song

called, WOAH-OH-OH-AH-AH-AH-AH-AH-AH-AH-AH-AH-AH
[<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6EfhAFA2yFE>]. It was a ten hour
song of a highly repeated short loop of a dramatic 'Woah, oh,'
sound, as in the title. Attempts were made to chant along, but they
failed and petered out. Jimmy loved it though. Matt's swimming was
as bold as the song. Normally Matt either swims aggressively and
loses his technique or swims too considered and slow. Right now it
is as if someone had stolen his parrot, he swam strong, determined
and with purpose. No-one had ever seen him swim like that before.
For Matt it felt he was in harmony with physics and nature. He won
by an arm.

The longer distance swims often seem to be scheduled at the
extremities, either first thing or last only to the much honoured
fifty-metre finals. In this meet, things have gone one step further:
their swims being after all medal ceremonies. Ives joked his
fifteen-hundred event is for the cleaners to watch as they clean up
after everybody. With his medal Matt was in the terraces in time to
play Sue's Oops song. The kids enjoyed doing the dance. Sue was cool
and confident. So was her eight-hundred metres swim. She easily won.
The best thing about Sue's swim even though she had no-one pressing
her she swam her heart out to get the best time she could. Her best
ever time.

Inexplicably everyone, save for a few kids missed Ives's eight-
hundred metre swim. At a guess it was because they had forgot he was
swimming it; they were at Matt's medal ceremony. Ives's eight-
hundred metres went well with him winning, by ten metres. Ideally
not as much as he would have hoped as he was holding back for his
main event the fifteen-hundred metres. Sue too would have like to
have swam the female's fifteen-hundred metres but it was sadly not
being hosted. For Ives's signature event, everyone was prepared,
sitting in the emptier terraces. Matt has saved the funniest song to
last. He played Diana Ross, 'I'm Coming Out'.

[<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-mjl63e0ms>] As before - Matt had
the kids, themselves and even the parents singing, 'Ives's coming
out.' With the older ones singing the extra lyrics, reading them off
his phone, as too were some of the other kids with their phones.
Getting prepared by the blocks Ives is unsure what to do. His
competitors look to see who Ives must be and why he's coming out.

Ives tries his best to repress his grin and his urge to dance. Right from the start he swims, as smooth but, as long and powerful as he can sustain. With it being a race of sixty lengths he lost track of who had lapped who, even though he was convinced he was leading, he took from Sue's inspirational swim and pushed all the way to the end. By the end of the day, all four of the older ones had attained personal bests and very happy victories.

At Sue and Ives's winning ceremonies they were both greeted by the same man giving them a three page A4 form with an envelope and telling them how outstanding their times were. He strongly told them they should apply for the swim to be selected for the Karachi swim representing the the British team. Ives's tacit raison d'être was to be on the England team. He was overwhelmed at the hint of being able to live in his 'castle in the sky'. As their ceremonies were back-to-back only Sue and Ives were aware of each other's invite. Not knowing how legitimate or quite what the forms meant they did not know what to say to each other, or to anyone. As far as they knew no-one else in their club had this recommendation. They quietly told Coach who knew who the man must have been. Coach wondered why he was at the meet. He had always expected that this day would come.

"What about Matt?" Ives fretted. Sue and Ives look at Coach for an answer,

"He is getting better and better. He should get his next time."

Although this was Ives's aspiration he felt unworthy. Mostly as his friend who he sees as a better swimmer than him had not been invited. Sue on the other hand was a lot cooler about it all. It was not as big of deal for her. Mainly as she has other reasons for being and, for her swimming, has started to see her potential as an outdoor swimmer.

All in all Bridgert came fifth out of twelve in the table. Coach paid no attention to this, all the swimmers from his small club came in either first or second. Except the girls' team-medley who came in second to last. Melissa, who is twelve, is very popular in the club. She won her individual frontcrawl races. No-one can believe how polite and caring she is. She will say hello to everybody with a huge smile, make sure the younger swimmers are okay, worry if some of the older ones have not turned up. When Matt went missing, every swim she would ask after him. When there is only one shower block

working she crowds her piers under one shower to make room for the older ones. Who usually would kindly thank her but let them finish (except Jimmy who gratefully and indifferently would cram in). Melissa was swimming the second twenty-five metre leg, on breaststroke. She entered the water in the lead with a perfect dive and came to the surface doing butterfly. After three strokes she realised. She used her mature gumption, impressively tumbled in mid-water, briskly frontcrawled to where she started, clambered out, which was not easy with the high freeboard, sprang onto the blocks and back off into the water. By that time the slowest girl, in fifth place, was well past the fifteen metre mark. Melissa breaststroked her heart out, gaining ground and so did the consecutive two Coynus Cads. By the last frontcrawl they missed out on fourth by one inch. With them being children the judges impressed by her tenacity let the result stand. Melissa, melancholic, expected to be shunned by her team; she was totally confused when the opposite happened. Her team had watched in awe at her wisdom and staunch crusade to not let her team down. All the watching audience applauded Melissa as she walked by towards the terraces, drowning out the cheers from Coynus Cads.

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Blackpool e02

After the expedited official final-ceremony, all the club gathered around Coach in the car-park. It is six p.m. Coach is proud. There is not an ostentatiously huge smile broadcasting this pride nor any vaunting panegyric. It is a subtle manner in his deportment. He calmly said to his swimmers that they should be proud of all their hard training in the past, their 'can do' attitude and keeping composed today.

"I want you all to tell your parents how well behaved you all were." Coach pauses for effect, "YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT! YOU ARE WHAT YOU THINK! YOU ARE WHAT YOU DO!*" I seen and heard you all being polite to people: using your manners, holding doors and I saw each and every one of you magnanimously encourage and recognise the efforts of everyone you swam against. It was not only me who noticed, all the other Coaches commented on your kindness out of the water and ruthlessness in. All of you shown an outstanding example on how to behave. Well-done!" Half in jest he finished with, "You were even a good example to some of our older swimmers. – Now go home."

[*Edward James Olmos, UN speech 17/03/09 Coach does not recall it was Ives who he heard the quote from. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=08VCkyG_C2s]

"Before you all go!" Sue quickly said. Sue has learnt over the years Coach abhors anything that could be construed as brashness. Speaking quieter and quieter Sue says, "Know you do not like fuss but on behalf of all of us, would like to say that none of us would be here today if it was not for your brilliance." Sue would like to clap but is well versed not to... Ives interrupts to help out. With the Coach's speech fresh on his mind he strongly whispers, "So say we all!" Sue joins in the loudly whispered-chant quickly followed by everybody, ""So say we all! So say we all! – So say we all!""

"Thank you." Coach speaks up. Hating the fuss. "Now go home!"

Ives and Sue waited until last to individually thank and speak to Coach. Ives again broached the subject of the forms for the national team and him being worried about Matt. Coach thinks for a couple of

seconds,

"I can download forms for everybody and you can all apply at the same time next week. Maybe that will be for the best."

"Oh, I did not know you could. That is perfect. His time was good. IF, which I am not convinced they will, IF they let me in they are bound to want Matt and who would not want Sue-b'ru?" Sue and Ives thank Coach again, make sure he is okay and wave him goodbye as he gets into the car for his lift back home. Coach is still cringing at their plans to stay out all night.

"You seem unsettled over this national team business." Sue states to Ives, whilst they are still out of ear shot of the others. Ives stops walking,

"I am. I have always wanted something like this. It, it means I would have accomplished something, people can always say 'he was on the England swim team him'. It is a daydream come true for me. I am petrified to be ecstatic about it though. Firstly in case it does not happen. Second if they think either Matt, you and Jimmy don't deserve to be on, neither do I. Oh, I'm, I'm not forgetting Katherine, but she has made it, she is English Aquathlon, well-done her. Matt though, his head is still not himself."

"You are over-thinking it Ives. This is now, a brief window in time, there is the future too." Ives is not quite sure what Sue meant, but he thanks her and asks,

"How are you feeling about all this swimming, you were a bit low those few weeks ago?"

"More optimistic now. Now we have the new club to look forward to. Especially it being an ideal time at night."

"Ives!" Ives turns to see Peter vying to get his attention. Ives smiles and heads towards him. Sue continues over to Katherine, Matt and Jimmy. "About yours and Matt's lift tomorrow, I can pick you up outside where you are staying if you prefer, if you have the postcode."

"Err, no we, haven't, we are not staying anywhere. Can't afford it I think we are staying up." Peter looks puzzled,

"So you five are just going to paint the town red? Pick you up outside of the police station then? Ha ha. Ha. To be young. So here then?"

"If you don't mind please, if that suits you."

"Is eleven okay? We have to be back to see family in the afternoon."

"That is perfect. Thank, thank you very much for the lifts."

"You're welcome. So eleven o'clock."

"Yes, what are you, Eliza and well, what are you three doing in the evening then?"

"Sarah."

"Yes sorry, it was the first time I knew her name this morning, long day."

"It's alright. We will first drive around. There maybe a few lights up for testing, then we are seeing a show up the tower."

"Nice. What is it?"

"Dory on Ice."

"Ha ha, I've seen the film twice. It is good. I bet you'll love the show." Peter was surprised by Ives's zeal for the animated film.

"Me and you Matt are getting picked up here at eleven. Is that okay?"

"Good buddy."

"Don't forget. - Jimmy what time are you?"

"Michael's Dad. At five." Saying that makes it dawn on Jimmy that five in the evening may not be ideal. All eyes turn to Sue. Holding back a smile she says,

"Can't stay with you, taking Daisy to dance, at, one. Sorry Jimmy."

Sue joins in at everyone else's laughter. Jimmy is not pleased.

"So what the..." Jimmy does not bother to finish his sentence as he would not be heard over the laughter.

"Fish and chips?" Matt rallies. They are waiting for Sue to come back from moving her car. Everyone has put their belongings inside, draping their wets over the seats to air.

They eat their food on the beach. Jimmy and Matt did not want to be the only ones drinking so somewhat grudgingly they refrained. The group play in the arcades having fun for hours on the cheap. In one grasp Katherine won two cuddly toys; spookily enough an eight-inch Dory and a Nemo. Sue's favourite is the two-pence drop machines. After they had spent all their specie, they go to a late café for an hour until it closes at two. Before they leave the café, Ives had a travel toothbrush in his pocket and a tube of toothpaste. The others have left theirs in Sue's car. Initially he had been skitted over it, now everyone wants a blob of toothpaste taking turns finger-brushing their teeth in toilet facilities. They walk, run and lark

about along the promenade looking at and climbing the different structural ornaments then head to the beach.

The sea is nowhere to be seen. Up the north end of the beach away from the main area of Blackpool they settle down thirty metres into the beach. Sue had chosen a band of rocks to sit by, small grey and sprinkled with dry seaweed. Their energies are dwindling. Ives and Jimmy use the last of theirs to create a mound of sand about two-foot high backed on to the rocks fully enclosing them. They kick out any loose seaweed and invite people inside. Immediately after sitting down Sue rises up with a frown and pulls some detritus off her bum and throws it over the rocks,

"Sea-creature comforts." Matt quips.

"Sorry Sue. Must, must have missed a bit." They felt the orange sand shelter did take some wind off them. The day had been warm and so has the early evening. The lack of clouds in the sky that had enabled the sun to warm their day is now making them a bit chilly. They huddle together, look at the stars and talk. When the friends are complimenting Matt on his swim, they are dismayed at his revelation,

"I was seeing if it was feasible to swim myself to death." Hearing it out loud he quickly tried to retract his comment, protesting he did not mean it in the way it sounded. Reiterating, "I do not want to kill myself. I just switched off the safeties. It was sink or win. In Moscow 2013 I could see Mo Farrah do it. He got to the front and switched off his safeties. It could be seen in his eyes that he would run himself to death before anyone passed him. He ran harder than self preservation would have let him. I am sure I am not the only one. Swimmers' faces are often hidden with no insight into what is going through their minds. Our movements look controlled and easy. In reality our fearful bodies are screeching 'stop no more we may die'. I bullied my body's fretting into silence by snarling my disdain for its cowardice. I was not trying to kill myself. I do not know what had come over me; I was not caring if I did die. Maybe unworthiness. I do not know. Mainly though, death would have come as a welcome relief from Jimmy's singing." They all feel for him, even though he is insisting he is okay. After a couple of minutes Jimmy and Ives leave Sue some privacy to have a heart-to-heart with Matt. To leave they use Ives's tongue-in-cheek excuse,

"Me and Jimmy are quickly going to find something to reinforce and

mend the mound after Katherine had trampled all over it." Katherine had thirty seconds ago damaged it on her way out to go to the toilet in the sand, laughing she had said,

"I thought it would be stronger." They cannot see Katherine nor any building materials except the beach full of sand to renovate the shelter. Sue could not penetrate any of Matt's psychological barriers. There is something there, she can sense the contours of it through his barricade. For now at best Sue reasons he does not mean what he had said.

Jimmy has to phone his Denise and reassure her is not up to no good. Matt spoke to his Sue straight after the meet and texted his mother. Sue has occasionally texted Steve to inform him she is okay. He did not want her to stay out all night; she did not totally want to either. She is here proving to herself she can be easy going. After about seven minutes, empty handed, Jimmy and Ives venture back and spend two minutes dragging some beach to the barrier with Katherine now snugly inside. Wasted in the darkness, Ives sissonnes over the rampart and sits clear. Jimmy clumsily hurdles over,

"OW! QUIT your pussyfooting!" Katherine scolds. Jimmy's,

"Sorry." Was swamped by Matt's appreciative laughter. After regaining their places Ives was the first to fall asleep quickly followed by Sue then Matt. Katherine was not comfortable sleeping. Jimmy and her talked. One thing on Katherine's mind was how much she is expected to pay for her GB branded outfit. Just shy of one-hundred pounds. Jimmy would have woke less athletic sleepers, "A ton for a suit!? A ton of shit out my arse that is." Jimmy and Katherine are both familiar with tri-suits, designed to be okay to swim, run and cycle in. Shops sell their own a lot cheaper. Jimmy already knew this as Katherine mentioned it a while back, but was even more disgusted to hear that she also has to pay to enter the race. The one coming up was one-hundred and forty-five pounds. Katherine is not sure why or gotten her head around the funding for all different sports. Her Dad who normally assists to pay for her running races, her cheaper running races, is not very keen on forking any more money out.

"Even have to pay to get there, Barcelona. Going is fifteen pounds. Coming back is ninety."

"Ever get the feeling the government want rid like? Having to pay so much more to come back. – It is a pain but representing England may

stop your grandkids throwing you in a biddy-home one-day." Jimmy finally succumbs to sleep. Katherine, reluctant to sleep, with Nemo and Dory on her lap silently keeps sentry over the nestled swimmers.

Sue's stirring was virulent causing them all to awake cold and with a moist sandy coating. Like the Weeping Angels able to advance when not being watched, the sea has grazed itself now only ten metres away from the drowsy bunch. It is half seven, light and there are people about walking their dogs. Tired they shuffle in silence to Sue's car to collect their still damp swim gear. The pool opens at eight.

Never spoken as to why but to keep the feeling of togetherness in the pool they swam as a group in something Coach calls a chain-gang but seldom has them do; similar to what can be seen in cycle events, it is where the lead swimmer at each turn drops off the front of the group to catch their breath whilst everyone else swims on by tumble-turning. This person would then join the back of the group where the new leader is swimming as fast as they can to the end where they will then wait. The swimmers aim to maintain the small gap to whomever is in-front of them.

After the hour swim they hungrily debate where to get some food from. Not wanting the over night burden of protecting any purchases, Ives is panicking to buy some rock. He convinces Matt to forsake breakfast and go along with him to find an open shop. They did not have to go far, jogging to the seafront road and turning to their left on a corner there is an open shop. The shop is more a front to where the rock making process could be viewed. This early it is not that well stocked. Nevertheless, Ives found some rock for his parents and to send abroad. He also gets one each for Peter, Eliza and Sarah, with an additional candy dummy for Eliza to say thanks for the lift as although Matt and Ives offered they would not except money.

"If you get these ones buddy, I shall get Sue, Katherine, Jimmy and Coach some from us all?"

"Yes thanks Matt, if you are definite?" Ives had no notion Matt was going to buy large ones for them. He even got three of the smaller ones for Steve, Jimmy's Denise and Daisy. Matt would not take off

Ives the extra money incurred. Matt joked,
"I had to get this for Jimmy to give Denise, he will be in trouble with her." Through texting Matt found the group about to go into a bakery for breakfast. They laughed at each other forced into eating pasties for their breakfasts.
"Healthy!" Katherine sarcastically pointed out. They all then laughed at Jimmy remembering he was stuck on his own until five.

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The Shiny New Club

Assembled with the same grandeur as when they would wait outside the sports-centre barely over one month ago but without the current suspense, they are bunched-up under the concrete canopy: although warm it is raining. Running from home, Katherine is unusually last to arrive, swashing through the ubiquitous puddles in her running gear. After she has greeted her restless friends she verifies, "So Coach is taking us and Lindsey is taking the kids?"

"Yes. For now." Was Sue's best summary of her understanding.

"No, you'll never guess what happened last night!" Katherine utters with panting and excitement. The group respond to her enthusiastic preface, she continues, "I was really tired last night, after us staying out all night in Blackpool. I was in the deepest sleep ever. It was only me in the house. It being half-term my sister and Aunt and Uncle are in a Welsh cottage for seven days. I was having a nice tranquil dream in the peace, but it sort of then turned into me dreaming a policeman and woman were gawping at me-naked on top of my bed. I do actually normally sleep naked—"

"If you wanted to kip in Blackpool you could have stripped off, I wouldn't have put the photos on the internet." Jimmy felt obliged to say. Katherine smiles, eager to resume,

"Anyway, I could see a bright light, I truly thought I was dying in my sleep, so I started trying to wake up. The white light was not going away in my eyes. Trying to open them I could see a blurred figure in black hovering over me. It was not a demon like I was then dreaming. It was a policewoman! After squinting and staring at her to make sure she was actually there, I look down to see me sprawled out naked like this..." Katherine quickly poses her arms and legs in a star position with her tongue dangling. "She must have had an eyeful. After me swearing rainbows, then throwing some clothes on' I found out what had happened. My Auntie had told the neighbour she and us all were going away. She failed to tell her I was only away one night. The busybody neighbour said she seen torches from her garden in my bedroom; it must have been me checking the time on my mobile after waking to go the toilet. So she phones the police. Because our estate backs onto the fields, the houses are forever

getting broken into, ours hasn't yet. The police were made-up being able to catch a burglar in action. Busybody gave them the spare key, so the whole of Muirseyside Police Force sneaked into the house to catch their criminals. Instead they all have an eye-feast at me naked. The bastards ha ha haha. There must have been nine police cars outside." After the long appreciative laughter, Jimmy enquires, "Couldn't the fluff-for-brains see you hadn't been burgled and so gone?"

"Well." Katherine slowly lifts her shoulder and bites her pouting bottom lip, "With it only being me in the house, it was sort of a massive tip. Ha ha..." Katherine struggles to continue, "They thought it had been ransacked. Ha ha. – Then not being able to wake exhausted-me, they said they honestly thought I had been bludgeoned and abused to death and were going to get the pathologist. Ha ha." The group are hurting themselves in hysterics.

"It could only happen to you Katherine!" Sue sips through the painful laughing. After they recover their composure, with the odd after-giggle, Matt states,

"I am surprised at you Katherine. I thought you would be really neat."

"No, I'm not dirty: untidy. My OCD has tried changing it but thankfully my untidiness must be read-only." In the quiet convalescence Ives jumps on the chance to say,

"Katherine..." Ives wants to recommence the controversy, the look on the other's face makes Katherine weary. "I was just saying before you came, I'm needing a new costume soon. Sue has been saying for months that she is in need for a new one as hers is getting holes in. We have been telling Jimmy for months his are too saggy, slows him down. What do you think about us all buying matching outfits when any of us need to get a new one?" Katherine looks to Matt and Sue for her answer,

"Yeah but show her the ones he means Matt." Matt shows Katherine pictures on his phone. "They are loud dot-vom. Would you wear them Katherine? Me? Not sure." Katherine is still reticent. Ives tries to validate his opinions,

"Trust me. I have got good taste. And Jimmy. His are loud." Very seriously Jimmy states,

"With jammers and women, there is a difference between having bad taste and a strong stomach; when there are cheap, albeit loud ones on offer." Jimmy successfully defending his discernment.

"But what is the point of us all having matching suits if it not conspicuous?" Matt finally gives his decision,

"Buddy, these would be conspicuous to Mars Expedition looking out of their steamed-up portal." Matt looks up into the sky. "That said, I will be in; when I need a new pair." To the relief of Katherine, the deliberation gets jilted to the sound of the door opening. They thank Katherine for her story.

The first swim went better than they anticipated. Coach enjoyed it too. Firstly there was less monkey business for him to reign in. Secondly, standing back to watch after telling Ives to tweak how his fingers come out of the water a metaphor enters his thoughts: from his cabinet maker apprenticeship making a lampshade, all those years ago he likens teaching the children to using a hammer and chisel to shape the wood. Now in his future, going through the chain of processes, he can see himself with the finest of cloths polishing the young adult's technique to his idea of perfection. He smiles at Ives's attempts to end the pull as he suggested, but feels he may need to explain his meaning in a different way. Walking to the end of the lane hearing the younger ones with Lindsey, he is appreciative that for the mornings he will still see and even occasionally coach the younger ones. As is his personality, worries set in, that all his yellow-chicks are in this one basket of five; if they stop coming he is out of his coaching job.

The week went well. Coach printed off the application forms for Matt, Sue and Ives. Katherine was expedient regarding Coach not sending off a form for her too. He did ask her, she humbly said there was no chance of her being accepted to represent the country at individual-medleys. Instead she is focussing her efforts on the aquathlons which she is already going to represent the nation. Her first race is in late September in Barcelona. Jimmy told Coach he will wait until next week after his five kilometre swim.

On Friday morning, they were all there. When the kids got out, Lindsey generously offered to do some filming for twenty minutes with her new fancy underwater camera. As soon as she offered she has never seen a group of young adults smile so much. The filming was not for prosperity but as a tool to help them improve their stroke. In her swimming costume, coincidently not too dissimilar to Ives's

proposed team outfits, Lindsey kindly directed the swimmers and hovered underwater filming them. Matt went first as his schedule was the least flexible. Since the lane incident all those months back, they have gotten to know Lindsey that much better and realise she is the only warm hearted gem, a ruby, in the pool's management. Everyone gratefully, gave Katherine fifty pence to buy the chocolate bar and thank-you card she offered to buy. Lindsey arranged to transfer the videos onto a memory stick of Coach's for him to oversee.

At this end of the week, talking they mention they already feel better swimmers, they mirror each others observations that sense they are swimming slower but are actually moving through the water faster. This was except Katherine. She is very reluctant to change any aspect of her stroke. Coach told her, "That's up to you Katherine. You are an excellent swimmer. It would be remiss of me not to keep making suggestions though. There is a saying to keep in mind, 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it.' Your stroke is evidently working for you. You're in team-GB."

The week did not ultimately close so well. Late at night Sue collapsed, again. In the bathroom, again. Hurting herself on the sink, again. This time it was her shoulder. Falling backwards the edge of her left shoulder caught the sink, jolting her collar bone too far forward. She got Steve to drive her to A&E where after X-rays they discharged her with a sling. A&E referred her to physiotherapy on the understanding that the physiotherapist may then refer her to a specialist if it does not heal satisfactory. Word was not fast to get around. This happened on Friday night/ Saturday morning. It was only last thing Saturday night, when making arrangements to support Jimmy's open-water swim tomorrow, that word got out.

Getting the whole story from Coach Sunday morning they were all relieved to read the text,

'Hi all. Sue is ok. She would not have gone to hospital but Steve made her. She could

swim now but giving it a week. She is worried why she keeps fainting and how petrified she was that her swimming career could have ended. Take care.'

The group texts their best wishes. Not to be too cheesy and bland, Matt's text included,

"...Any excuse to be a part-timer!"

On a similar vein Ives added to his compliments,

"...God's way of getting you to improve your kick. Hehe."

Katherine's and Jimmy's were mostly best wishes and that she will be missed for the week. They want to find out more about her fainting, but also do not want to hassle her with questions she does not have the answers for.

That night an honest discussion between Matt and his girlfriend Sue took place. A section of it is Matt is masking his frustration, "Sue, I am the same. I have little interest in outdoor swimming, neither swimming or watching. I have interest in my friend. He was a good help to us in Blackpool. We won't be there long. Please."

Sunday morning, Jimmy and Ives felt honoured in meeting Matt's Sue. In Southport Coach had already been there for five-minutes after finding Jimmy when Ives arrived. Ives was oblivious to the fact he was on the same train as Matt and his Sue. Southport is thirty miles away on the train. It is the terminus for the local train, the other terminus is near their swimming pool, on the opposite side of the region to Southport. As a result a return ticket was not expensive. Coach readily admits the openwater swimming scene is not his expertise. He focussed on restating his wetsuit appropriate tweaks

to Jimmy's stroke. Jimmy is very excited but not nervous. Coach took a picture then shook his head at Jimmy climbing a lamppost to get a better view of the course. All the mass start swimmers Jimmy has swum has dulled his nervousness. Denise was also there. Jimmy forgot to mention this to anyone whilst she was queueing to use the toilets in the porraceous plastic pods.

Sue seemed to sway her Matt to keep themselves to themselves whilst they sat next to Ives and Coach. Between the build-up and race they sat on a small terrace that folds to be towed as a HGV. The swimmers were out of their sight for a large proportion of the race. When they were in view, Coach using his binoculars found it an exercise in futility trying to distinguish Jimmy. Ives enjoyed chatting to Coach and learning about him. Coach too enjoyed chatting to Ives. The atmosphere in the terraces was the absolute opposite to Blackpool. The only excitement was a jolting vagary from Coach; his composure suddenly replaced by consternation. Entertaining waggish movements accompanied his unnecessary hurrying to get to the finish point in time.

Denise had watched the whole event standing by herself. She was unaware that Jimmy's friends and Coach were present until they both went to support Jimmy out of the water. Betwixt Coach and Denise Jimmy dogtrotted towards Matt, his Sue and Ives. Exhausted and pink, in a happy way, Jimmy appeared proud of himself. Matt and Ives shook his hand.

"I can see you gave it all you had. Well-done buddy." Matt congratulated Jimmy.

"Thanks, I did." Jimmy looks at Coach. "We still have not been able to get my time or even position." Coach takes over from Jimmy who suddenly needs to sit.

"He won his wave, which was the main wave. We don't know. We got told the results will be available shortly."

It transpired Jimmy won his category with the fastest time out of everybody who swam. However there was categorised elite swimmers who set off first, thirty minutes before. All of the elites' times were marginally slower. Coach eventually explained to Jimmy that officially the elite's time cannot be compared to his as they are classed as 'going off the gun' and their clock stopped when they

struck the overhead board with their hands. Jimmy, passing where the board was, stopped the clock by clambering out and walking over a sensor. He summed up to Jimmy firmly stating, "Clearly you would have beaten most if not all the elite group. On Monday we will be sending a form off for you too, for the national squad." The only other slight bit of drama was five minutes out of the complex prompted by Denise, Jimmy remembered he had forgotten his wetsuit. They rush back and Jimmy fortunately finds it where he had left it.

Katherine texts Jimmy to congratulate him after she had texted Coach to discover how Jimmy had got on. Katherine had previously apologised that she could not miss swimming in the dock this morning.

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Bishop Barney

They all concur that the week has gone quickly. They are very pleased when their Sue turns up Thursday evening. After the predictable greeting Sue says to Jimmy,

"Gutted I could not see you swim."

"Don't sweat it Sue love. I knew your arm was knacked. Only our-Ringo in his yellow-sub could see the race anyway; all them-crowd on the transformer-truck could see was Fanny Adams. Probably why they did not charge the spectators."

"Do they..." Sue, a bit incredulous, was beginning to ask Jimmy whether they have ever charged spectators, with this being Jimmy she decided best not to. She pauses. "Well-done on your swim." Sue give him a hug. Ives has headed over. "Was saying to Jimmy, gutted to miss his swim."

"Could, we could at first make out someone destroying the field. Turned out to be Jimmy."

"Heard I missed Matt's Sue too."

"Oh yes. You did." Ives tells her in a victorious manner. Sue directs her question to Jimmy,

"What was she like?"

"She had a huge pair off-" Sue's look stopped Jimmy's jubilation in his verbal and gesticulating tracks. She returns an inquisitive gaze to Ives.

"Ha ha. She was really really nice, a bit quiet to us. Maybe, I, err, I don't know because she seemed a bit scared of us. She was well spoken. If anything you'd say she was on the emo/inde side of life. I can see why Matt likes her: he does seem to like his big funbags." Both Jimmy and Sue laugh.

"Take it she does not swim then?" Sue unconsciously glances at her own.

"Could be but I doubt it. She did not have her parrot with her." Ives laments oblivious to Sue's glance.

"Good meeting the girl though." Jimmy adds.

"Jimmy, was there, erm, at any point could you hear us cheering at all?"

"No." Jimmy reluctantly answers. "I knew you were there though. It

spurred me on. Whilst swimming I proper imagined. I imagined you, Coach and Matt and Denise all there cheering for me; oh and not to forget Matt's Sue who I imagined jumping up and down getting black-eyes off her h—

"JIMMY!" Sue shouts. Jimmy laughs. Shaking her head Sue invites them, "I'm getting in."

In the showers, after their training, Matt quietly and seriously asks Sue,

"So how are all things health wise? After I had that unmerited heart scare I totally feel for you; how are you coping?"

"Okay thanks. I'm fine thanks. Was in the doctors the other day. He was good, very thorough of everything. He wanted a blood, urine and even stool sample."

"So you gave him your knickers?" Matt got punched in his arm for that comment. "How long do you have to wait for the results?"

"Anything up to two weeks."

"You will be fine Sue. Nothing to worry about buddy."

"To be open, haven't the time to worry."

The training has stepped up. They are already doing between ten and fifteen percent more lengths. As a consequence, in the rests, Ives struggled to inform Sue how much progress he has made with his gameshow. Every time Sue would land it was his time to push off. The other swimmers were puzzled by the peculiarity of Ives shouting a sentence at Sue before he would dive in. Firstly it was:

"On track for filming. No clubs or celebs have pulled out, yet."

Ives is leading the lane and so the first to dive.

Before the second dive it was,

"Mmn-nerrrh, reluctantly started website; easier than what I thought. Same as making three pages in an office document. Still don't like it." Climbing out of the pool to dive back in again is adding that extra element of toil.

They are all fighting it. Next Ives loudly states,

"Stuff from Chinyl is on its way. Zoe's comedians all said no, they want money." To which Ives dives in.

Forty seconds later with Sue pulling in, next he hollers,

"Famous people are richer so I decided to ask someone famous."

Although not annoyed Sue was not amused either by the structure of this dialogue.

"Want a local comedian who is cheeky and into a bit of swimming."
Ives performed an atrocious dive.

As Sue pulled in she was primed to tell Ives off when she heard,
"Emailed John Bishop." Sue's whine for Ives turned into kudos for
him taking advantage of the fortuitous chain of events that lead to
somebody fulfilling his criteria. Sue has also seen John Bishop
live.

Sue can't help but get excited at the thought of meeting him in
person. She cuts a couple of seconds off her rest so she can get
back quicker. Looking up she hears,

"Said he'll do one show." Ives majestically dives in. With
frustration Sue screams like a banshee. Underwater, Ives did not
hear. She cannot bare this fragmented conversation any longer,
especially for five more lots. Matt nearly dived on top of her as
not waiting her turn she pushes off from the water instead of
climbing out to dive. He was already committed all he could do was
spread himself into a belly-flop. He lifts his goggles to see the
white of Sue's agitated water, she is kicking frantically to be as
close as possible to Ives when they complete these four lengths. Out
of breath now sounding like a harem of seals Sue says the best she
can,

"We're going last in this set now. What is the score with Bishop?"

"That is basically it, got the email before I came out saying he
would like to help out, by doing one day. Like only one day."

"Ives!" Beaming a smile, wonder-stuck Sue is even more so struggling
for words.

"I think we are last now. You go." Ives says clipped to waiting
Matt, who then dives in. Jimmy immediately dives in, too close
behind. Coach has noticed his wayward ways. "I'm not that keen."
Ives dives in. That was the worst tantalization yet. Sue missed
diving again, replacing it with a shriek. Coach, in the shallow-end
looking at possibilities to improve the tumble-turns, is perplexed
to why Sue is screaming. When Sue comes around again stoutly she
says,

"Why you wouldn't want him!? No more! Just tell me at the end." Ives
sees it as his chance to get back to leading the lane. He dives in
at the same time as Matt, to Matt's right, aiming to power down the
wrong side of the clear lane and hope for the best when they come to
turn. Poor Matt, with his dive disturbed again, momentarily pauses
to see what is going on. Later, after Ives's apology to Matt the

chatter settles to less consequential matters. Including mocking Jimmy when Coach tells him to set off ten seconds before everyone else for practising his open-water slipstreaming in the pool.

Following the swim, the swimmers and Coach praise Sue for her swimming. The injury and days off have not detrimentally effected her. Sue hunts-down Ives for him to justify why he is not eager to have John Bishop visit one Swimquisition week.

"Sorry Ives, being back in the water after a week off made me a bit crazy. I was convinced you told me you did not want John Bishop to visit. HA HA." Ives knows perfectly well where this is going. He also knows he has not got the means to divert Sue's onerous onslaught. Ives keeps quiet mentally preparing. He finds himself holding back nervous laughter as Sue's glaucous gaze tracks his. "I don't think anyone will be crazy enough to turn down a free, - It is free?"

"Yes." Ives hears his timid voice was not as bold as intended.

"- A free visit from John Bishop. Unless all of a sudden they became a crazy fool. I am sure you are not a crazy fool. Are you?"

"I know what you mean Sue, but, but..."

"But?"

"The, what's, the, what would we tell the regular host, who is doing it for the other nineteen or fourteen days? Naff off, John Bishop is here?"

"Who will you say this to? We have got no-one." The unaffected 'we' immediately rescinded Ives's defensive attitude. A quick pause then Ives says,

"Sue." He steps towards and then hugs her. "Ha ha ha. He he, you know I think you may have snapped me out of a bit of craziness. Ha, because I'm thinking now just to ask Matt to do it. He is not going to mind if John Bishop comes along one day! I think he'll like it."

"Do see where you may have been coming from, JB can be there to co-host that day with Matt."

"Co-host." Ives follows quietly with, "If we can get Matt to host at all."

"I got a bit crazy too haha. You know what I'm like over my John Bishop: I'd marry him. Have you seen his smile?" Ives steps around Sue to get into the showers. She got a close up of his face demonstrating his demur at the invite to talk about a man's smile.

Matt and Jimmy are glad that the scary disagreement has been resolved. Sue and Ives make room for them in the showers.

"Are you still allergic to chlorine Jimmy?" Matt says in response to the sight of Jimmy enveloped in foam and stepped aside from his shower stream.

"Denise reckons it could have been one of her tarty perfumes? I reckon though that this mob aren't cleaning the lemno properly. One of us is going to end-up ill or worse. If these leather-medallists cause me to die I'd be bloody un-livid. Saying that though, I have been sound lately. The smell of chlorine on my skin still knocks my stomach. I always shower when I get home." All flabbergasted they look at Jimmy,

"You don't like the smell of chlorine?"

"When I get a smell of the chlorine throughout the day I get a confidence boost. Reminds me of the true world I live in - the swimming world." Sue and Ives respectively tag-team Jimmy.

"Denise don't like it either."

"Sometimes worry over you Jimmy." Sue soulfully states.

"Seriously Sue love, how have you been of late? I know you had the motivation melt a few weeks back. ARE you okay now darls?" Matt was set to leave, he hung on to hear Sue's reply to Jimmy's concern.

"Thanks Jimmy. Yeah I am fine dot-bon. This new club has helped, not getting a pressue-head in a twist rushing to get here after work. Without all the kids the atmosphere is much more laid back. So thanks Jimmy, yeah I'm fine thank you."

"The atmosphere is much more placid. Makes for a longer stroke. I am going now. See you folks tomorrow."

"Before you go Matt." Sue quickly says. "How have you been? Your blimp was bigger than mine."

"You know how it is, like everyone, good days and bad days. Thanks for asking. Bye for now. Good swimming champs." Matt walks to his cubicle.

"That is typical Matt. Enig-Matt-ic. Do worry over him. Feel helpless to help." Jimmy and Ives nod their head agreeing with Sue's concern. She continues with, "Mentioned all of us meeting up and doing something together where we can have a catch up. He says it sounds good but will not commit to a date."

"He does try to make molehills out of mountains. We will keep plugging away at Matt." Ives attempting to reassure Sue. "Also we will keep our eye on him." Ives accentuates with the 'two finger

watching somebody sign', pointing the tips from his eyes to where Matt went to. Sue smiles and says,

"Going back to something positive, are we all set for Swimseye then if Matt hosts it?"

"Erm, yes, I think so. Got, err, got the, all the celebs booked in, hope they will turn up." Sue does not want Ives to repeat himself so interrupts,

"Well what is left to do?"

"Err, nothing, just a case of waiting. Oh, err, later on, closer to the date I would like us all to practise the show a couple of more times please, if none of you mind. I will see if the students filming it want to come along too. The Professor told me they will be in touch right at the start of September. All I have left to do is put a bit of info, a schedule, on the webpage then I'll see if it works. It should only take half an hour."

"That is sound." Jimmy tells Ives and Sue. "Which one of the comedians said yes?"

"None. Going to, maybe ask Matt to do it. I want him to do it, he may not say yes."

"What was the John Bishop rigmarole then lad?"

"Oh, he, or his agent can't remember who the email was from, said he will do one show." After Ives's own episode with Sue, Ives did not want to mention any more about it so straight away he adds, "I best confirm we are getting the pool for free. If not I can shop around for cheaper pool. Sorry, last thing, I have taken advice from Coach, he said that if we are on the first show and win it," With mock brashness Ives adds, "Which we will!" He looks around thinking he is losing Sue and Jimmy's concentration, "People may question our integrity. Instead, if you don't mind, have our team as a backup in case people do not show up."

"That is what I wanted to say to you in the café but did not have the heart. I think he is right." Sue says. "I'm rushing dot-gone so probably will not see you outside." Near the showers they all say their goodbyes. With her large bag, waterproof mp3 player and helium-heart Sue sings herself off to her cubicle singing, 'If You Leave Me Now' [<https://youtu.be/n0LsU3xhuXs?t=1m9s> Please Dont Go - Paradise & Dreams - DJ VIBES and LIVELEE].

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Men and Women of Letters

Coach takes part in a keep-fit session for an hour on Thursdays and Fridays. On this Friday evening all the swimmers wait poolside for him to arrive from the hall. He, as usual on these nights, rushes in. Coach was never able to do his keep fit sessions on Thursdays. Now, since the reshuffle of times to enable the Adult Coynus Cads it all fits together perfectly for him. This Friday before telling the swimmers to do the usual warm up Coach hesitates. He is nervous. A heedful glance at his swimmers who he is precious over, worries him; Coach perhaps the four letters in his bag, no matter what shapes the innocuous black squiggly lines form, will change their life vista. "I am sure it is not that cold. If you wanted to be warm you should have all become long jumpers. You'll just have to swim faster. Make it fourteen-twelve-twelve then." He tells them. Instead of scrutinising their techniques he sits.

With the end of their warm-up set imminent, he heads over to the lanes. There are two lanes out. Mark is there and Zoe is too. Zoe, Mark and Katherine are still swimming. He knows Katherine will soon be finished. He stoops down to get their attention. Between the two lanes they gather around. Katherine, panting, has landed. "I am not sure how you want to go about doing this. I have four letters with team-GB stamped on." Like Coach had thrown a hair-dryer into the water, the mood instantaneously billows. They try their best to mollify their reactions to the myriad of emotions. Katherine looks on with curiosity. Her selection happened completely differently: being selected immediately after she amazingly won her first aquathlon. She sympathises for them having to find out in this way. Katherine glides over to left of the lane to quietly explain to Zoe and Mark what is going on. Coach restates his question, "How do you want to go about it." They all look at each other. No-one makes a sound. "Two-hundred metre blurred IMs." Coach dominantly, but sensitively, tells them. Being overwhelmed by their letters Coach reminds them, "One fly, three backstrokes, two breaststrokes, two crawl. Go off fixed rests of twenty seconds. Then two fly, one backstroke, three breaststroke and two crawl. Then two, two, one and

three. Then three, two, two and one." He says to a blank looking audience. "Just once."

"We have done these before." Sue says to help jog people's memory.

"Yes thank you Susan we have. It is a swim down memory lane for you all." Coach says, not helping. Sue petitions to discipline their muddle due to the letters and unfamiliar set,

"Look at it like this, one less fly. The next set, one less back and so forth. To make up for the missing length you do the extra length on the following stroke."

"Oh I remember, I think. Thanks. Who is going first?" Ives says.

In the rests they chew-the-cud the best they can about what they are going to do regarding their letters. Sue is phlegmatic over it.

After that set she is the spokesman,

"Coach, can you pass us the letters at the end please. Any one who wants to open them before they go home will do in their cubicles after their shower." Coach never ceases to be amazed at the quirks of his swimmers or people in general. The swim was slightly surreal for the four, Katherine, Mark and Zoe too were also caught up in the anxious wake.

After helping to put the equipment away, Coach passed them each the white windowless DL sized envelope. The addresses to Coach were handwritten.

"How do you know it is not a letter saying, 'you sent them to the wrong address'?" Matt asked in jest.

"Or saying we will be in-touch?" Sue asks with less jest. Ives had already sauntered off to the showers closely scrutinizing his closed envelope. To answer Sue's and Matt's concern Coach shrugged his shoulders with a smile on his face. He clearly had not opened them. Coach's response made them slightly suspicious that Coach, as usual, knows more than he was letting on; not suspicious enough for them to ask him. Arriving at the showers Matt and Sue see Ives's envelope somewhat precariously perched on the two clothes-hooks by the showers that run cold. They put theirs on top of Ives's after positioning it better. Jimmy asks,

"Sue, all this fretting about the swimming, we are forgetting the proper important things; have you had any scripts from your fainting blood tests yet love?"

"Oh. Told Coach on Wednesday, I thought he would have told you,

sorry. They came back all clear."

"Good-stuff buddy." Matt says as he pats Sue on her shoulder.

"Was, is it because you should have been born in the eighteenth-century?" Nobody laughs at Ives's joke. He thought it was funny. Matt, unconventionally was not out of the showers first. Sue and Ives beat him. Even Jimmy forewent turning himself into the marshmallow-man. In silent solitude they entered their cubicles.

No-one could make sense of the letters except Matt. He was the first out and dried. He did not have to say anything to Coach sitting in the usual seat, with his usual coffee. Coach easily descried Matt's dejected comportment. Before speaking Coach read the letter.

"That is good, they are insisting you apply this time next year. They are aware of your results and your constant improving. Well-done Matthew." As Coach stands to shake Matt's hand Coach insists, "I know what England are like. They would not have said to apply if they did not mean it." Matt tries his best to be virtuous and to smile.

"We don't know what they mean?" Jimmy, Sue and Ives tell Coach in harmony from seven metres away. Jimmy picks up his stride to pass his letter to Coach. Both Ives and Sue look at Matt. They could tell he is not pleased.

"Is yours the same?" Sue asks Matt.

"It says to apply next year." Sue's jaw drops. They know their letters do not say that. Coach looking up from Jimmy's letter, "Matthew's says they can tell from his progress he will be more than ready by next year." Coach carries on reading. Sue and Ives enthusiastically congratulate Matt. Jimmy then too shakes his hand. Zoe and Mark come out of the changing rooms together. Not needing to help tidy the equipment they are normally out before the others. They amicably hang around to hear their friend's unravelling events. "Are all your three's the same?"

"Basically." Sue answers Coach.

"They are inviting you to swim in Sheffield at the end of September."

"Why though?" Sue being the conduit to their clawing suspense.

"Sheffield is to see who will represent England in Karachi."

"So we are no further?" Ives questions.

"You are! To be selected for the team a swimmer must qualify in an

officially recognised event. Sheffield is invite-only and one of the few recognised events before Karachi. You will be swimming against all the people you know from the television. They will be trying to qualify."

"They won't have an open-water event then will they?"

"I should not think so. Not in Sheffield." Coach pulls a face and looks down. "This is not your letter! It is Susan's." They all half laugh and half worry. Ives had Jimmy's letter. He passes it to Coach. Coach quickly scans it. "Plonker. The letter is the same but at the end of September you're swimming in Scotland."

"Congratulations." Matt loudly tells them all. "I am thrilled to bits for you all!"

"Still not sure what it all means." Sue quietly tells Matt, yet Coach still heard.

"It means all four of you and Katherine too, have to keep up your improvement and train even harder than you ever have."

"Forgive me." Matt says clutching his hands, "I will have to dash off. Well-done champs." They all respond to Matt, telling him he has made a great achievement.

"I will repeat myself. And I will be telling Katherine." Coach warns, "You will all, including Matthew, have to focus one-hundred percent. No distractions." Ives feels like most of the veiled-steely reprimand is aimed at him. "Your swimming improvement has to be included in each part of your life. From the way you breath standing in line, the way you do your coursework doing your ankle exercises, everything!" Sue, Ives and Jimmy nod in compliance. Zoe and Mark make a quick fuss of them before the two walk out together. Jimmy is on his bike tonight so Sue walks out by her shunted self.

They head home, Ives and Jimmy thanked Coach the same as Sue had done. They thanked him for all his friendship and ability which has helped them all get to where they are. Ives reassures Coach he is finishing college next week for the summer so will spend more time in the pool. He asks him for sets to do. Coach promises to print some off for him.

Halfway home Coach reads off a text he has gotten off Sue,

"Worried over Matt. We will all have to be careful and kind around him. BTW, How did

you know what the envelopes were????”

Coach texts back,

'I knew it would be. I have been around the block a few times. You are right about Matthew. Take care.'

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Sports Paraphernalia

Ives is still in a surreal frame of mind. He woke up full of confidence for his world. He quickly put the thoughts of racing in September behind him. It was too scary thinking he will be in rivalry with people he looks up to and admires from the television. Ives, on the verge of going into his house after his solo Saturday morning swim, sees a post office van pulled up outside with the biggest parcel he has ever seen. It was heavy too. Nervously he signed the driver's grey electronic box thing and hauled the behemoth inside. With a pair of scissors he scores the brown tape at the top of brown box. He gets a strange smell: it is the vinyl banners from Chinyll. Due to the strong smell, with the reminiscent odour of camping gear, he heaves the box into the back-garden. The banner is rolled. Unrolling it on the mildly damp grass he can see they are not brand new, but not old. It is a pure white banner with the orange Chinyll lettering. It is three-metres long by two-foot drop. There are three. Underneath where they were in the box, Ives with more enthusiasm looks through. He pulls out what he guesses to be a pile of a hundred pairs of Chinyll cheer-sticks. The kind that when inflated to approximately the size and shape of a baseball bat sound similar to loud clapping when struck together. Vacuum sealed in a two inch pile, there are A5 size leaflets advertising Chinyll products and website. Two-dozen white and orange Chinyll lanyards and over a hundred Chinyll mesh shoulder bags. Proud but scared of the commitment, he packs them all away.

Contemplating on what he has been delivered his lack of flags and hats worries him. He emails the woman who he has been in contact with from Chinyll; he thanks her for the stuff and asks whether she received his previous email which he includes for reference. He hastily eats his Aldi muesli. Whilst eating his apple he gets a short reply from Kirsty telling him that there will be no contract but he is expected to display the banners prominently at all times. Ives did not mention it in his email but Kirsty tells him that the vouchers will be sent fortnightly. There will be a form accompanying the vouchers that he is to fill the names and addresses of who won the vouchers and get them to sign. Kirsty made no mention of the

hats or flags even though the email that Sue wrote and Ives's email just now did mention them. Forgoing his usual Saturday shoulder exercisers Ives feels compelled to get back on his bike and cycle to his cousin's house. The cousin who secured the large cheques for the winners. Arriving there Ives sees his cousin was on her way out. She quickly said if he finds out how much the hats are going to amount to she will ask the manager. So off Ives goes once again. He heads towards the industrial estate where he thinks Sue's ex-boyfriend works.

On a peaceful enclosed estate on the nearest outskirts of Kovenes, Ives finds what he is looking for. A unit which looks roughly ten years old and is split into two. On the left half of the unit a board says 'ImAGenie - graphic design.' The clean corrugated building looks inviting. The large roller shutter is open. The gap large enough for a HGV to drive in reveals five different workstations on the floor. The workstations are of the same lateral dimension of a car. Their heights are the same as kitchen worktops. Although probably strategically placed they are of no regular pattern. Walking his bike inside smelling a sulphur/burning-computer type smell he sees only two people. The older man at the closest workstation looks up and starts to walk over. Ives rests his bike on the inside of the external wall.

"Hi, can I help you?"

"Hi. Thanks. Yes please. Our swim club is holding a competition and I need some swim hats printed please, but the thing is I don't know if we are going to get our money back for them so I need to know if I can afford them. Can you print on swim caps please?"

"Yes have printed on latex before."

"No, erm sorry, they are silicon."

"Silicon?"

"Silicone?" Ives says and nods in affirmation.

"Silicon? It shows you the last time I was in a swimming pool. When do you need them for?"

"Mid-august please." Tension visibly leaves the man's shoulders at hearing that. Ives thought 'mid-August' is not a fib as he would prefer to have all the freebies and prizes all packed in the Chinyl bags in plenty of time.

"From you seeming stressed I thought you wanted them today."

"No it is the not knowing if I can afford them that is stressing me

out. How much would it cost, approximately please?"

"It is hard to say. Have you got your design?" Ives pulls out his memory stick and smiles. "It depends on how many colours you have. The less the cheaper. Come up." The man gestures for Ives to follow him up the free-standing iron staircase that leads to a eighteen foot high catwalk which runs the length of the building: probably enabling the boss to look down at the floor. He goes into an office, a bit in need of a brush up but not totally untidy. There are three computers. One is near the door backed onto the wall behind the catwalk. The other two are next to each other in the centre of the desk that lines the wall to the right. Ives notices two redundant computers stacked on top of each other. They are yellow with age and Ives wonders why they have been kept. The man reaches out for Ives's memory stick who uses the computer with un-stereotyped accustomed ease. Ives's design is quickly displayed on the large screen. The designer makes thinking noises. "I could get that down to fewer colour screens for you."

"The other side is on the stick too."

"The other side?"

"Yes that is one half of the cap. The other side is a mirror image."

"Oh I see." The man opens up the other picture. "I see. That would be on the other side. What colour are the caps?"

"I have not got them yet. I was waiting to see if it was possible. I have brought a plain light-blue sample one to show you." Ives reaches in his rucksack.

"White would be best." Ives pulls the hat out and passes it to the man. Who looks at it and rubs it through his fingers to feel the texture of it. "We should have inks that are suitable."

"I was thinking if you print that..." Ives flips the hat over, "Then print the other side please."

"I see." Ives notices the man says 'I see' a lot. He assumes it is due to his trade and so being a very visual person. "The biggest expense is setting up the press. This design is two different prints. That will add to the expense." Ives has designed the cap with the gameshow logo at the front spread to the wearer's ears. The Chinyll logo and the credit-union logo sit above and below each other. "They are a mirror image of each other." The man scratches his head. "I am visualising how you could go about doing it." He then rubs the back of his neck. "The union logo and the other are isometrically designed. That is lucky. You could move this pattern

to the front..."

"That pattern is the logo of the competition."

"...If you make that smaller and have it both on the front and back that would solve it." Ives thinks for a second whilst looking what the man had moved around the computer screen. It is small compromise to assist in keeping the cost low. He wishes that Chinyll would have agreed and even given him the money upfront. "Oh the text. Wait. You were nearly lucky in a way. Most of the lettering again is symmetrical. It is only the 'S', you could change and use a lower case for the 'N'. The 'Q' is easily done symmetrically. You could have the tail running down." Ives does not fancy the thought of that.

"Erm, what if, I, I could, if I put the lettering... I've got it: have the lettering running around the design in a circle.

'Swimquisition' running from the top to bottom and the duplicate on the other side. For the 'S' I could have two next to each other, one the wrong way." Ives sketches on the back of an envelope what he is alluding to. "Would that work?"

"Yes it would. That is clever. What do you do?"

"I swim."

"For a living or college or in university?"

"Oh, no, very few people do make a living from swimming. I'm doing A'levels."

"Design?"

"No. Sciences. One of our swimmers made the design."

"So if I move the lettering around for you on the computer, have you got a backup of this?"

"Err yes I have lots of copies but erm, can I move it at home myself please? I need to keep the cost down."

"Okay that is fine. Did you do the design?"

"Erm? I've just thought of the lettering. But one of our swimmers made the design." It makes Ives sad having to repeat himself.

"It is good. I'll reduce the colours now to show you. You know what would makes things cheaper is..."

"Yes."

"...If you have this logo, your Swimquisition logo the same colour as one of the other logos. It will make it so much more affordable." Surprising himself Ives notices that he was not tempted even momentarily : he knew Katherine had put her heart and soul into the design including the colour. Besides he likes Katherine's colour.

"Chinyll and the Union not paying can be the one's to be offended. I'm not upsetting my friend, the girl who designed them." The designer smiles to Ives to show he agrees. Ives says firmly, "if it has to be one colour can you make it all the pink please. It is FF54AE."

"That would look good against the white." The designer says nodding his head.

"Katherine, erm, she, her original design is pink on black. Could you print pink on black caps please?"

"Sure. Yes. – Edgy." He approves whilst looking at the screen. "that will save you a lot. – You go home change the text..." Ives interrupts,

"Not, sorry, her not knowing the name then, I designed the text: so she will not mind."

"... In the meantime I'll put some test inks on this sample cap."

"Thank you very much. What about the ballpark cost?" The man did not seem keen to answer.

"If I don't have to order any inks, how many were you wanting?"

"Erm, four in a team, times two is eight, times, ohh that is a lot. I did not realise how many caps I would have to buy in the first place. Say for, ooh, one-hundred and twenty, it maybe less. No sorry it can't be that less I'll need one-hundred and sixty please."

"One-hundred and sixty. If you provide the caps I will do it as a favour for thirty pounds. And that is a favour."

"Thank you very much for your time. I'll call next week with the designs if I can get them paid for. I was surprised you were open today."

"Not for much longer. See you next week then."

"Thanks. What was your name?"

"Colin. And you?"

"Ives."

"See you Ives."

Ives went home through the park that is near his pool to do some pull-ups and other exercises on the red outdoor equipment they have installed there and in most parks.

Once home Ives texts his cousin from his Dad's phone,

**'£190 £160 for 160 caps. £30 for printing.
If that is still cool'.**

Mid-Monday morning Ives got a text of his cousin saying,

'190 OK. Cant giv advance. Bring receipt & can give money straight away.'

Ives was surprised that the credit-union are giving him that much money. Originally he was planning for them to split the cost with Chinyll. Ives is discommoded by the snag of, even if it was only for an hour, where he is going to get the hundred and ninety pounds from.

On the Monday preveening he rushes to the graphic design units with his memory stick. Colin did not look at the contents. In preference he shows Ives the swim cap which had the test inks on. He had put a smear of red, yellow and blue one side of the cap, fading into nothing. Stretching and folding the cap Colin is pleased with the result. Ives thankfully informs him he will bring the caps as soon as he has got them all.

That night in swimming Katherine is there. With five minutes before seven she begins to tell them,

"My Auntie sometimes reads spiritual books. One weird fuchsia coloured one she was doing a jig over was called 'Cosmic Ordering Service'. She said people can use something called the 'Cosmic Ordering Service'. Basically if you politely ask the cosmos for something it will give it to you. If you are a believer. Yesterday I was running alongside a road by where Ives lives, near the park." Ives nods to show he grasps approximately where she means. "Like in swimming I don't have a drinks bottle, but I was hot. On a long training session sometimes our running Coach drives the route and passes out water. Thirsty, my mouth like a beige-android's armpit, I thought I'd test my Auntie's book. I politely asked the 'Cosmic Ordering Service' for 'some water please.' I was expecting to see the running Coach in the distance. Right after asking I felt a pain on my right hip to that sound laughing-scallys make. I looked down to see a blue Volvic bottle, half full, without a lid, sliding along the pavement. The scallys had thrown it at me out of their passing

car. Runners do get things thrown at us quite often. I was freaked out. For it to happen right after I had asked for water. And! For it to be water. I didn't even know scallys drank mineral water. It was so weird!"

"That is so weird!" Ives exclaims enjoying her story.

"That is strange. Poor thing, did it hurt?" Sue was being more compassionate than Ives.

"A bit yeah. You can still see the mark." Katherine raises her hip for them to see the mark on her easily bruised skin. "No I'm never asking for anything again. My Auntie said it was because I didn't believe and was being impudent."

"Next time buddy ask for a couple of bags of twenty-pound notes. Soft and easy to pick up." Matt jokes.

"It would probably be inside one of those red Post Office vans as it runs me over, ha ha." Katherine gauging the outcome for Matt.

"Anyway love it is good to see you darls." Jimmy tells her. "You have been a bit hit and miss lately."

"It is to do with my running and open-water training and coursework. I'm away next week too. Holiday."

"Zante!" Jimmy states in a tone that demonstrates they are all excited for her and so all remember. Sue has walked over to the top of the lane ready to start. Ives remembers to tell Katherine,

"Katherine. Katherine." She looks to Ives. "A graphic designer was very impressed with the design you made; he basically said you should do design!" Katherine seems cautious about the compliment and eager to follow Sue who has dived and is dolphining,

"Thanks. I cannot believe you are actually going to use it."

"Of course Katherine."

Tuesday in his college dinner break Ives rides into the city centre. He goes into the Sports-World shop with his ten pounds. With the sensation of doing something naughty he gets all ten of the white swim caps from the carousel. They are folded into quarters, with a small manufacturer's logo prominent. There is an open pink hat, Ives places his ten hats on the floor apprehensively inspects the pink hat. Happy the logo will not be in the way. He picks up his ten hats and goes to the counter. He asked the cashier can they give out any more detailed receipts. The forty-year odd old woman told him they could not.

With his bagged hats and receipt Ives rides like a wannabe courier to his cousin's credit-union. She is not on view so he asks for her, telling the woman she is his cousin who is getting him sponsorship. His cousin Sarah comes out of the side door. After the usual polite conversation asking how each other are, from his bag, Ives proudly removes the ten hats and receipt to show her.

"I thought you needed a hundred and fifty?"

"Yes, I do, well a hundred and sixty. I'll get another ten with the money from the receipt." Sarah looks at him confused.

"You can't... Were you going to come back sixteen times?"

"Yes, twice at dinner time tomorrow. Then I am off on Thursday."

"Do you want me to lend you the money?" Sarah firmly but indulgently asks.

"Erm. It is up to you. Thanks, but if, if you are certain you will get the money back from the union. That is the best receipts they would do." Sarah laughs.

"I am sure."

"The shop I went to had another twenty-two in stock. There is another shop in town. There is one near my house. Then it maybe a few days until they get more."

"You get as many as you can. I am sure Scott passes some. Does it have to be Sports-World?" Scott is Sarah's Scottish husband.

"They are the only place where they are a pound."

"Wait here." Sarah tells him. She proficiently makes eye contact with the teller to let her in. Within a minute she is back out with a cash card in her hand. She walks outside. Ives follows but then hangs back when she goes to the cash machine attached to the credit-union. Marched back inside with her, "Hundred and sixty." Sarah hushes and passes him the folded money. Ives puts it into his breast pocket on his shirt and buttons it securely. Handing her the ten pound receipt Sarah says, "Keep the receipt. Pass me them all together."

"Thank you very much Sarah. If the boss wants to give me the receipts back I could send them to Chinyll to see if they will donate half."

"No, I would not bother. The union will have to keep them for their records, it will complicate matters. Leave things as they are. The manager was asking this morning if the swim is still going ahead. I told him the first one is the twentieth of September?"

"Yes, thank you."

"He said the people getting the prize will have to sign forms. Is that okay?"

"Ha ha, yes thanks. Chinyll have said the same."

"I will tell him."

"Thanks again. Thanks for everything."

"No problem. I am going to finish my dinner."

"What is it?"

"Chickpea salad."

"Sorry to have interrupted you." Ives looks at the time and is certain he will not have time to buy the hats now. He decides to go back after college. Shopping had initially took longer than he thought.

After college, including what he purchased in his dinner hour Ives was able to acquire eighty-four hats from the two shops in town and the one near his house. He phoned his cousin's landline leaving a message to tell her eighty-four. At the pool when Coach customarily asked what he had been up to, Ives told Coach who said the H&B shop next to Aldi sells them too. He is not sure for how much. On their way home Coach waits outside whilst Ives goes in. Normally it is Ives waiting outside Aldi for Coach. Jimmy had his bike tonight so waits with Coach. Five minutes later Ives comes out and tells the dutiful two,

"They have twenty seven and they are a pound. They are exactly the same as what I have got. Which they needed to be."

"Did you get them?" Jimmy bluntly asks.

"No. I don't normally come out with money."

"Elvis!" Jimmy says to Coach. Jimmy takes his sporty looking red rucksack off and pulls a wad of money out. He eases a twenty and a ten pound note out. After Ives thanks Jimmy and tells him he will pass it back tomorrow, on his way back into the shop Ives hears Coach ask Jimmy,

"Why are you carrying enough cash to choke a donkey?"

When Ives got home he put the thirty pound in his goggle bag so he would not forget what he owes Jimmy. He phones his cousin to apprise her of the extra hats he has bought. Her husband, Scott, had picked up twenty two. She done the maths telling him he needs another forty nine. Ives is confident there are plenty of H&B shops around for him to get the rest. The best attribute of H&B shops is they open-up

early. The next day before college feeling light-headed he got eighteen from a shop after swimming but before breakfast. By dinner time he had all hundred and sixty. He surprised himself he had not lost the receipts. He squared up with the credit-union and his cousin.

The last day of college for the summer, Ives was glad to have the afternoon clear. He made the most of the afternoon rushing to Kovenes with his caps. One-hundred and sixty swim caps are heavy, very heavy. Colin proudly flaunted the 3D cap on the computer with the three logos on. On the screen they look unnaturally curved to Ives although Colin has done a good job with the position and size of them. Ives places his trust in Colin. Resigning himself to the fact he'll find out if the trust was misplaced by the end of next week.

During the rest of the week Katherine swims for most of the sessions. She tells her swimming friends again it is due to her running not going well. Ives is off college now. He had invited Katherine a couple of times to swim at dinner time with him. The second time Katherine told him she would like to but needs to get ready for Zante.

The Friday night swim they wish Katherine the best for her holiday. She is really looking forward to the two weeks away. In her garden, she had been trying to work on her tan and been doing sit ups to look better in her bikini. It was not only Sue who reacted to that information by telling her to behave herself. If anything Katherine needs to do anti-sit-ups, if they exist. She is already buff for a female, with the stereotypical build of a gymnast. Ives tells her to have a swim in the Mediterranean sea for him. Katherine had hinted to them all she is planning on doing as little as possible.

Matt, Katherine and Jimmy have left. Coach tells Sue and Ives, "It will be good seeing any of your folks at Sheffield." Sue and Ives more or less look at the exact same spot on the floor. "I am sure they will be proud." Ives notices the hoops are starting to come away on the top Sue's mocha, square-toe vaquero boot. He traces his gaze vertical. Their reticence unwittingly is gradually turning into rudeness. Sue does not look likely to speak any time soon so

Ives reluctantly does,

"I would, I would like them to be there. If asked, one of them would but they are not interested in my swimming and it would be made plainly obvious they do not want to be there. Tutting huffing and puffing. I could not cope with it."

"I don't know about that." Coach has met Ives's parents many years ago through his older sister.

"They would add so much negativity, 'why don't you swim like him' they would say. It won't be fair on either of us."

"I think you might be wrong, but think about it." Briefly Ives obeisantly looks down. However Ives does not want to comply with Sue so he looks square at her until she speaks,

"More or less the same as Ives but different. Like you suggest, will give it some thought." The order of the day soon turns to what Coach is going to have for his tea.

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Big River

Saturdays strike again. Confused texts go around that night Matt is in hospital. Ives was surprised minutes later when Sue phones and says she is in her car outside his house. Ives had never seen Sue this misplaced. With her USB looking eyes, Ives could tell Sue had been crying. He cannot determine if it was Matt or something in addition upsetting her. He decided to bide his time to find out. After the usual social niceties Sue asks Ives, "You know where Jimmy lives?" "Yes, I have been a few times. It is the house with solar panels." "Can we go there now? See if he knows anything more. If not we will phone Coach." Ives was glad for a ride in her car. He had not been in a car since Blackpool. At exactly seven p.m., as soon as Sue turned the ignition on the very vocal happy-hardcore music plays where it left off, forty-nine minutes in. Sue hastily drives off, Ives feels his geek effervesce. Immediately Sue begins to loudly and cathartically sing. Ives had never heard the song before. He looks out of the window still feeling he is in a movie whilst Sue sings, "Without a doubt I will be missing you this year and today maybe grey. I see the sky moving over me. Wish I could fly to where ever you maybe." [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dChlpyNcbxQ&t=49m0s> DJ FX @ Club Kinetic - NYE 1996-1997. (DJ Vinylgroover & Triixy feat. Heidi - Wishing on a Star.)] It was only a few junctions before they arrive at Jimmy's house. Ives still cannot understand why Sue is this upset when they know very little; he can only make guesses.

Sue notices it appears that Jimmy is ready to go out.

"No, not heard a peep since your text Sue." Jimmy sheepishly tells her. Sue sits sideways in the passenger seat and puts her phone onto speaker mode,

"Hi Coach, you are on speaker phone. Sorry to bother you. Phoning over Matt. Ives and Jimmy are here too."

"Hi Susan. Good to hear from you. I cannot think of any more to say. I got a phone call to tell me he is in hospital." Sue is finding it hard to follow Coach. She switches him off speaker and turns fully into the car to hear better. Whilst Sue is in the car,

"She seems really upset. It may not be solely due to Matt; I don't know if something has gone on with her-Steve." Ives informs Jimmy. "I do feel sorry for the ginge like. Sue has always had the weight of this world on her shoulders. I can totally tell Steve sometimes pulls her tampon-strings." Ives pauses to assimilate what Jimmy had said. To try to keep the mood light he says to Jimmy, "It is sad and it has effected her. Looking smart by the way. Where are you off to?"

"Off out with Denise to meet a few of her and my friends in town. It'll be amok like." Jimmy goes on to lose Ives by referring to different pubs in town. After around five or ten minutes Sue comes out of her car running her hand through her hair. She huffs a bit, looking on the cusp of tears she tells Ives and Jimmy, and to some extent herself,

"He is in hospital, the royal. He went into the River Muirsey behind Lehane Hall and tried to swim down with the tide from Lehane Hall into town." Sue bubbles and wipes away a tear. "I could not understand why Coach said he had to go hospital. He was saying they were just checking him. The hospital phoned him, Coach, up. He said the Fire Brigade pulled poor Matt out near town. He did not need any help but people walking along the prom had phoned nine nine nine. They made him get in the boat. Coach kept saying he is fine." Sue is as frustrated as she is upset. "Something is going on: can't even visit him." Sue takes a hard look at Jimmy and Ives.

"Why?" Ives asks. Sue shrugs her shoulders with the bearing of a small vulnerable school girl,

"Coach says he is not sure what type of ward he is in." Having to acknowledge the connotation of the words she knew is the trigger for Sue's distraught sobbing. Ives and Jimmy look at Sue. Not much of Sue can be seen through her hair. They glimpse at each other for cues how to best comfort her. Ives steps next to his tender, oozing, companion and puts his right arm around her and with his left hand puts a tissue from his pocket to where he thinks her nose should be. Getting poked in the eye with a tissue momentarily breaks Sue from her crying; it makes Sue laugh twice. Ives tries to edge Sue closer to Jimmy. Looking up with her ginger hair stuck to her tears,

"For their sake, hope those bastards have not put him in a white coat." Ives and Jimmy deduce what Sue means. "I don't get it: Coach said he should be out tomorrow."

"They wouldn't dare." Jimmy indignantly states. "We'd break the

bugger out!" Ives is still trying to make Sue feel better,
"It's probably okay: we don't know what has happened properly.
Sometimes Coach does not get things; it can all be okay and cool. We
can go to his house and visit him tomorrow." Sue has stopped crying
saying,
"Can't. Coach is going. He told us to leave it to the week." Ives
thinks. Sue looks at Jimmy, her posture changes, she is eager to say
something but Ives has begun first,
"Well Sue, we can be there in spirit: we'll get a card and sign it
and give it to Coach to take and if we chip in for a present. You
know where Coach lives Jimmy?"
"I do." Jimmy confirms.
"I am needing to leave now anyway. I'll go to the Asda by you Ives,
get something." Sue then says apologetically, "Were you wanting to
come Jimmy?"
"No, here, it is alright, here is a flimbo, is that enough, I could
give more but what would we get?"
"That is plenty." Sue smiles. "Sure Coach will want to throw-in
too."
"Well here, give me that five quid back. Here is a tenner. I'll get
the flim off Coach when I give him the card."
"I'll drive to the Asda then."
"I'll walk back here with the card and prezzie Jimmy. It will save
Sue driving." Sue and Jimmy say their goodbyes. Jimmy urges to Sue
that Matt will be fine. Jimmy tells Ives,
"If I am not in, leave it with one of our lot who answers and I'll
take it first thing in the morning." Sue is in her car. Ives quietly
says to Jimmy who is now standing on his threshold,
"He did well. With all the currents I did not think the river is
swimmable; never mind getting from Lehane Hall to nearly town. Even
with the tide. That is some good going."
"He has not even got a wetsuit. He is a tough beast is Matt lad."
"Considering he is a sprinter as well. He should have phoned us, I'd
have done it with him."
"Me too lad. Me too." Jimmy felt guilty for his little laugh. "You
best get off, Sue is waiting."

With Ives inside Sue starts her car moving forward. In a really odd voice she states,

"It's all our, well my fault." It is not the meaning of the words that Sue shared but on the breeze of her words is a rare and raw elemental emotion of a slashed soul that made Ives's skin sizzle submerged in the same gas as her searing wound. "I should have been a better friend." To this way of thinking Ives did not find an instant rebuttal falling off his tongue. In the silence he evaluates his interactions with Matt. He painfully feels ways he could have done things differently.

"Yeah well, if you are blaming someone blame me." There is a pause. "you are his favourite he really likes you. You've sent him a million more texts than me, than anyone. You are always approachable and been there trying for him. You are always thinking of him." More silence. The sizzling on Ives's skin has spread to his stomach as the thought of him canvassing Matt to ask his boss for cheques and if that has had any unmentioned repercussions with his job. Sue catches Ives's thoughts, although her steering body lacks any clue, unbroken tears are falling from her face. Looking away with a blink Ives blinks again and feels a forward perch of his eyes with twin tears. Looking naturally upwards and to his left he tries to shield Sue from his show of emotion keeping his hands from his face and putting tension in his eyes to stem a flow. Sue can tell. On noticing, an old-salt, Sue snaps herself out of it, wipes her face and gives Ives a firm look that he notices in his periphery. She does not move until, with an anchored head, Ives moves his eyes as far right as they can go until they just meet Sue's where he espies a dimpled smile.

Sue parks her car outside Ives's house as they have no money with them. He gets his bank card and they cross the road into Asda. Sue opts for the biggest card she could find. Ives strongly asks, "But is he ill?" Softer he continues, "Get well from what? I don't know. What do you think?" Although pushed for time Sue is resolute

to choose the best card she can to help her friend.

"What would you get?" Ives points and questions,

"Erm, well-done?" Sue glowers at him. Initially she thought Ives was trying to be funny; remembering it is Ives she is dealing with she concludes it was not silliness but ineptness. Sue concedes his first point and scans the shelves,

"This one maybe?" Sue says with relaxation. "Thinking of you."

"Perfect!" Ives announces. Sue, looking dissatisfied, rotates the card in her hand. "It is fine Sue. It is not tiny. It is what we write inside that is important." Ives, trying to appease her.

"Suppose you are right." Sue going onto the next task, "Present? What shall we get? Can't get him beer."

"Nor sweets."

"Books, magazines? No. What shall we get?" Sue is starting to fret again. They begin to march through the aisles.

"Ha ha. Have you seen that." Ives eagerly points to a photo frame, "'Champ' was always Matt's word." Sue picks the metal heaveyset silver photo frame. The polished stainless steel frame is mock-chiselled around the word, 'CHAMP'. Sue is unconvinced and complains,

"It is reduced. They are not even five pound."

"It looks good. Have you still got those photos on your phone?" Sue nods. "Put that good one of Matt with his medal taken at Blackpool inside of it. They print photos here. And, we even, we could even do one of the each of us."

"Us?"

"Yes Sue. There are different frames that say different things. See. We are his friends, he may like to be reminded of us." Sue has semi-warmed to the idea. "Sue, I know it is not perfect. Let's quickly walk around the last bit and see if there is anything better. If not we will get them." As Ives suggested they quickly power-walk around but see nothing suitable.

Choosing from the different titles they realise they are going to need six in total. Sue browses through her phone and suggests, "Put Matt in the 'champ'. There is a picture of me with Jimmy: put that in the 'friends' one. Same with you and Katherine together. Then Coach in 'the boss' frame. Only need four then."

The Asda-man in the separate photograph section was impressed by the price they paid for the frames. Due to the lower quality of the instant machine, he suggests that they are best to use the cheaper hour service. He tells them twenty minutes should be sufficient. Ives walks Sue to her car. He sits outside Asda mentally composing his message to Matt before writing it in the card next to Sue's. After fetching then dropping Daisy at her friend's, in the car Sue makes herself cry wanting to listen to their Mum's old CD on her MP3 player playing, Jimmy Nail, Big River
[\[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJ86bisRo3s\]](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJ86bisRo3s).

After collecting the photographs, Ives is impressed with the look of the them inside the frame. He thinks it is a shame Sue has not seen them. He runs up to Jimmy's house. As predicted he was not in so Ives left them with one of Jimmy's brothers.

To put them off mithering to visit, everyone was told Matt would be back in the pool in the week. True to Coach's word Matt was in the pool as if nothing had happened. Respecting Matt's unspoken wishes not to talk about what had happened to him, an awkwardness filled the time taken to excavate other topics to chat. Later that swim Matt thanked them all for the presents and card. He sincerely seemed to appreciate the photographs and what they could represent. If for no other reason they were glad Matt was back as with Katherine being on holiday and Zoe and Mark's attendance being haphazard on Monday it was only the three of them. The only other mention of Matt's adventure was Matt insisting that nothing sinister was involved. In the showers Matt unabashedly admits to Sue and Ives (possibly as he could tell Sue was about to tell him she is worried about him) that he is happy to have the counsellor that was offered to him as the upshot of the day's events. Matt unintentionally broke Coach's confidence by telling them,

"Even Coach has had a counsellor. I would recommend one if you ever getting grief off Steve or lost a race. I want to keep mine as long as possible." Sue reply was,

"I have thought of an answer for Ives's, 'I love swimming because...' question. Our team's answer could be, 'We love swimming because we've got an incompetent counsellor.'" Nobody knew what Sue was talking about nor laughed. Aware of her fail, "Been hanging

around Ives too gods-damn long."

Even Matt does not know the reasons why he did what he did. That is what his counsellor is working towards. For now, she is dealing with the impact of Matt's GP sending him for his heart tests. The experienced counsellor harbours the GP's negligent dealing with Matt's case has profoundly uprooted the foundations of his whole psyche. Talking to Matt's mother on Sunday, Coach found out more details of the encounter with the GP. Evidently the GP passed over Matt's concerns regarding his heart to quickly listen to his heart. The Doctor of nearly retirement age told Matt, "It looks like you have a rare genetic disease called arrhythmogenic right ventricular dysplasia, ARVD. Have you heard of it?" Matt told the GP he had not. The Doctor went on to crudely explain, "It is where your heart muscle is replaced by a type of fat. People with this disease suddenly drop dead. Athletes with it seem to me the most at risk." The GP at this point was unaware of Matt's swimming. The doctor erroneously led Matt to believe there is nothing that can be done and the best he could do for him was to give him blood pressure tablets that may add a statistical year to his life although he could still drop down dead at any point. The GP ratified his diagnosis by explaining he was region's specialist for people with ARVD before he became a GP. He then told Matt, "We have ran out of time today. If you make an appointment with the receptionist to return next week and we can sort some medication out. Some tablets to get your normal blood pressure extremely low."

Matt did not want to worry his mother or to confide in his friends, so he dealt with it alone. The first week he spent hours on the internet looking through medical journals that were far beyond his familiarity. Dissatisfied, he came to the conclusion his GP was neglectful not sending him for the battery of tests normally associated with the differential diagnosis. What angered him more is that there is a greater depth to managing ARVD than blood pressure tablets. At his next appointment to the bitter antagonism of the GP Matt insisted in getting a better diagnosis. Luckily Matt held his ground and an appointment with a Cardiologist was arranged.

Coach is unsure how long that Matt had been carrying this grave worry with him. The first Coach knew was from his phone call those

months back. Supported by the NHS liaison service, Matt did put a complaint in to the GP's practise manager. In the end the liaison advocate was that disgusted with the GP's arrogance, against everything she believed, she recommended that Matt should forgo the complaints procedure and put a claim-in against the GP. At the time, to Matt's mother's pride, he told her, "As Coach once said over a different matter, if it would be deducted from his wages I would have no doubt sued. There is no way I am suing the NHS. Why will I bite the hand that cures me? Which struggles to afford medicines already."

Once Matt had talked in-depth of his heart-incident through with the counsellor he felt returned to his old self again. To his good humoured dismay, she soon singed him off with the all clear and ultimatum Matt should share his problems in the future.

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The Quiet Weeks

At the end of that week, on Friday night, Ives turns up dressed but with a swim cap on his head and a huge grin on his face. It was his Swimquisition cap. They are all impressed. Ives gingerly takes it off saying,

"I've got to be careful. I did not order any spares. Got to give this to someone." The sight of their friend in this novel and vibrant gimmick, official and of his own making, intimately intimidates them into an icebound awe briefly appraising their own adequacy. They are impressed. Suddenly Sue shatters the silence recalling she was supposed to be sorting out the swim caps, "Sorry Ives. Totally forgot!"

"SUE. Don't worry about it. You have done more than enough. It has all worked out for the best. Got them for thirty pounds and then got the money back from..." Ives proudly points to the Riverton's sign. Sue is the first to comment,

"I do like them, they look tasty, like a big boiled sweet from afar."

"They are impressive buddy. Well-done. I like the circular motto."

"Thanks. Catwalk done the logo. I am so impressed by Catwalk. She's a genius. I have never seen anything better in shops. She is talented. As soon as she is back I'm showing her."

"How much did they work out as?" Jimmy asks Ives.

"Erm..." Ives mumbles some numbers to himself then says, "In the region of one-twenty."

"For what?"

"Each."

"What!" Jimmy shouts. "I paid five pounds for mine. And it looks naff. The market don't sell them." They all laugh at Jimmy's over reaction. Ives unsuccessfully attempts to pacify him,

"Yours is a good make. These were on sale being plain black. Also he said he was doing them as a favour?" Despite of Ives's words Jimmy goes into a rant of how in this country everyone is overcharged for everything. Sue curtails the rant by asking,

"Is this because of your new jammers I seen this morning which I liked by the way. How much were they?"

"Sorry Ives kid. Our shop doesn't sell them jelly-bean guitar ones."

You were all right though: I'm like fish-piss through the water now. Although was overcharged for them."

The next few weeks were uneventful. Katherine came back very happy from holiday. Whilst there she met a Russian suitor. They are still in touch through video calls. The poor thing never came back any browner, just with bigger freckles. Her skin is not the tanning type. Ives got his job in the farm picking strawberries again. He was offered the hours -half seven in the morning to twelve thirty p.m. The hours in a way suit him. The farm is only five minutes bike ride from the pool behind a RSPCA shelter. He goes there straight after morning practise and straight to the pool for an hour after work. He would have liked more hours in the afternoon but the farmer does other things then. Ives uses the spare time to do college coursework after he has eaten his dinner at around half-two. Sometimes he reluctantly falls asleep for an hour before he leaves for practise.

Katherine, Matt, Sue and Jimmy all seem okay. Obeying Coach's orders they have all found opportunity to up their training. One morning Coach, as he heads off to the windowsill to pick up some papers, warns them,

"As some of you are easily distracted of late, I have done you each some aneroid training homework." The group in the water look at Ives to blame him for the extra work and answer their confused looks, "Aneroid. I presume he means dry-land training. Aneroid means, can mean, without liquid. I have heard of aneroid barometers. I don't know if it the right word to use in this context."

"He has been on his coaching websites again." Matt observes. Sue again asks Ives,

"What was his last one, inculcate. Is 'inculcate' correct?"

"Yes, I'd say so. To fix on mind by constant repetition." Ives says proud to be their go-to guy for words. They felt special getting individualised dry-land training assigned to them. After the practice Matt looked at his sheet and protests in jest,

"Come on, even a good swimmer could not do this!" Although he said it with levity Matt doubted he had enough talents to close out all the exercises on the sheet.

"You are a good swimmer. You all are. I know what you are all

capable of." Coach retorts with a dead pan. They all thanked Coach for his efforts.

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Sue'aritants Jim'aritants Kath'aritants Matt'aritants

Coming up to September with everything being in place for his gameshow Ives decides to have a couple of practise events. Coach was not best pleased. He wants nothing but concentration on the Sheffield swim in a few weeks. Nonetheless, they used the free Sunday slot and Zoe offered to lifeguard for free.

With feeling inadequate: not knowing how to help Matt, worry about the Sheffield swim and nerves of possibly biting off more than he can chew with his gameshow, Ives has not yet had any feelings of excitement. Now with the show looming a healthy and virtuous excitement is sneaking in. Everybody arrives as expected, aside from the students that are filming it. Ives thought it would be a good chance for them all to meet for the first time and for them to see what the show would be all about. They carried on regardless with Ives holding back any signs of disappointment. As a type of revision Ives had used his college-work merged with his swimming knowledge to muster up questions for the whole run of the show. Today, by luck, the span of the events could not have been better even if he had spent months preparing and testing them. The combined sum duration of everything including pausing for explanations and drinks was an hour which Ives estimates will easily cut into a forty-five minute show.

Matt had agreed to host the show today and permanently. He was really funny. As everyone suspected he has the appropriate type of presence. They fribbled through two back-to-back practise shows. The only tweak they made for the consecutive second practice is instead of using kick-board floats for the backstroke obstacles Sue suggested it will be safer to only use pull buoys but double the quantity. Katherine was not there. The second practice was nearly ten minutes quicker. Afterwards Ives, Sue, Jimmy and Matt even had fifteen minutes in the water to train before Bridgert arrived.

Whilst getting ready for bed Ives emailed the student who he had been in correspondence with initially via the Professor. He told him it went well but would like to still meet up if nothing else.

By Tuesday night Ives had still not had a reply so he sends a short email asking the Professor if he should have someone else's email from the group. When Ives got home after his dinner-time swim on Wednesday there was a response from the Professor. The response managed to be both polite and curt. The Professor has, for no given reason, decided to pulled out of participating.

Wednesday evening Ives complains to Jimmy regarding the Professor's breach of trust. Jimmy contends,

"Could Steve Parry with Coach not have a word in his ear like? Convince Professor Dumb in the library with an optional-pipe?"

"Ha ha. Hmm, it will be in vain and I don't want him to be as horrid to Coach and Steve Parry as he has been to me. I see it as a bridge under water now."

Jimmy points out,

"You're spot on. I know the type. Sod them. If they want to lie and tell you they sent emails they never, you are better off without the evil. Companies and people screw you over it is what they do." Jimmy asks a bit calmer, "What companies are involved that you have contracts with? You've not noticed anything fishy going down with them?"

"No contracts with anyone. Chinyll said the banner must be displayed at all times that is all. They are not even bothered about how many shows we do. The same with the credit-union. They are more interested in getting their picture taken with the big-ass checks."

"Is that all?"

"Yes. Even the insurance is covered under Bridgert and the pool's. I think. I hope. Yeah, I too poor to sue anyway."

"You are sodden lucky lad about the contracts. Companies do not care. No contracts or agreements! Nice one. Like in GTA we are the fair-game-pedestrians, sadistic businesses are the players and the 'no-police cheat' is on. You know on the weekend just gone my Uncle..." Jimmy commences a rant on the subject of the hassle his Uncle had been having when the DVLA lost his registered-keeper document. It did conclude again with Jimmy trying his best to denote 'things will work out for the best'. His contained seething gradually escapes again saying, "Okay, it is still all for the best like I said, regardless I reckon I should fire-hose his car for you."

"No thank you Jimmy." Ives has no clue what 'fire-hosing a car' is. Nevertheless he does not want Jimmy to do it. He imagines, knowing Jimmy, it is nothing violent or felonious; probably filling his car full of water.

Although the chat with Jimmy helped, there is still a remnant of upset. Ives speaks to Sue. Sue was a bit more practical. She pepped Ives up to think he will make an excellent job of filming, "And besides you have not got a role on the show as such now. Matt can guide people to where they should be. I am helping with the equipment and Jimmy too. Can you get your Sister's underwater camera?"

"Yes I checked last night. It was in the loft."

"See you clumsily fall in the water and realise you are a fish all along."

Katherine's response was more or less a coalescence of Sue's and Jimmy's minus the offer of crime at the end. Katherine said she will come for the last single practise show on the weekend. Ives offered her a spider plant as an incentive.

Ives was scared. Scared of the show. Scared of his swim in Sheffield. He was even apprehensive of going back to college. More and more vivid dreams give him something additionally to think about.

Ives did an okay job at filming the last practice the following week. He was up later than he wanted to be on Sunday trying to piece together the shots. The blue underwater camera, is designed as camera, not a video camera so the underwater clips are grainy unless very close. Lindsey offered him hers. The expense of it was too intimidating for Ives in case he, in all likelihood, damaged it; Ives with thankful appreciation did not take up the offer. Paul the Lifeguard lent them a full sized tripod for Coach's normal video-camera. Ives was happy he could not clumsily break the tripod. While filming Ives left the tripod with the video-camera at the shallow end. It is in view of some of the travelling shots but he is going to leave it that way. Ives is happy from his best filming effort that people watching the video will get the gist of what is going on. He enjoyed the submerged filming. Jimmy mostly filmed the above

water swimming action.

Ives is frustrated with the time it has taken to edit the pieces together. His slow computer is not helping matters. Two and a half hours were spent editing the first show when he should have been sleeping letting his body recover. He agonises he will have to get quicker editing or his swimming will suffer.

Ives knows he is in bed late due to the editing. Worrying that he cannot be spending five hours editing two shows every Sunday evening keeps him awake even longer; so does the degraded feelings from how the Professor treated him. The dread of how tired he will predictably going to feel when he wakes and trains unrests him even more. Eventually he came a conclusion. He scribbled it down with a red pen on a used envelope: expecting come morning the notion could have dissolved as a dream.

'No filming it all. Only film what is going to be put in. Tell Jimmy.'

It seemed so simple. With in seconds of getting off the floor back into bed Ives is in slumber. Normally the first thing Ives thinks of in the morning is swimming. His filming idea had not left his mind. Ives gets dressed his mind goading him he maybe losing his swimming edge. He silences that goad by fretting he will not have time to practise with Jimmy his new plans for shooting. As a consequence of all the worrying Ives leaves the house without his towel or training fins. He remembered Katherine's spider-plant. As expected tiredness poisons his swim training again.

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Sunday Swimquisition

This is the most nervous Ives has been in his life. He is waiting at the pool for Markus Rogan and Markus's close friend Martina Grimaldi. Ives is there an hour earlier than his friends are first scheduled: this is due to Ives's worry Markus Rogan may turn up early. From Markus's text it was looking likely. Instead of pacing Ives decided to catch the last twenty minutes of public swim time. The lovely receptionist, Lindsey, a different Lindsey, promised she would fetch Ives if Markus turned up early. She had no idea who Markus Rogan was. Ives described him as a, smiling big friendly boisterous foreign man and then gave her a Youtube search [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oq-kd6V3hh0>].

Ives managed to empty his mind in the water. Whilst Ives got himself dried the song, 'Living Daylights' by A-Ha, was playing on the centre's radio [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=de2rBeWNgFo>]. Checking his hair in the large mirror by the changing area exit he looks at the reflection of the dressed public leaving the pool. Ives wanted to tell all of them how excited and nervous he was and that they should be too. Instead he reverted to pacing around the seated area. As soon as he got there, in front of Ives there is a commotion in the far corner of the seating area around the vending machines. Stewart the Lifeguard is stomping and banging things. Behind him there are flurried Lifeguards. Hoping what is going on does not subvert his first ever show, he looks to Lee the Lifeguard who is standing next to equally skittish Sean. Without having to ask Lee vaunts,

"We have put Stewart's cycle-shoes in the vending machine. He can't ride home in his flip-flops so he will need to spend two pound fifty to get each one out. Hah ha haha ha hahahahaha."

Sitting next to Coach's empty seat, Ives stares at the entrance without taking his gaze away for a second. He sees part of Sue. She is struggling with the encumbrance of her stuff. Ives goes over to help when she gets through the one way door. He takes large rolled up pieces of paper from her. With hands and arms full Ives attempts the best hug he can. Summing all of Ives's movements Sue can see how

excited he his.

"No-one else is here. Just us." Sue looks around. To Ives asking, "What is with all the gear?"

"Daisy and I did these." Sue unrolls one. The red and light-green large lettering on the eighteen-inch by six-foot roll of paper says, 'WELCOME WALLSEND WAVES'. "The green and peach are their colours." "They're boss they are!"

"Borrowed the paper and pencils from work. Daisy has done half of all the teams already."

"Thank you so much Sue! Is Daisy able to come?"

"Have dropped her off at dance. Depending how long it all is, may have to go and pick her up."

"That's cool Sue. Thank you so much and tell Daisy thanks and how big my smile was; look! It will also make the teams smile and feel welcome." In the corner of his eye Ives sees Lindsey's long platinum-blond hair next to someone a lot bigger than her. It is Markus Rogan and Martina Grimaldi. They are both married but not to each other. Martina Grimaldi is Markus's friend that he would train with. With no objections from Ives, Markus had insisted on bringing her. Martina Grimaldi is an Italian ten kilometre swimmer. Very talented she has won many medals. Fitting with Markus she perpetually seems happy. Even here now she is lighting up the sports centre with a huge smile.

Ignoring the unfamiliar butterflies trembling his forearms, he walks through the empty foyer to Markus and Martina. Sue sheepishly walks behind. Ives messed up the handshake by stepping too close. He did not care so went in for a hug,

"Thank you so much for coming!" Markus chuckles and says something Ives could not make out. He is in mid-hug of Martina so hopes he does not need to respond. Sue hugs them both too. Ives says thanks to Martina for coming.

"What do you drink?"

"Tequila, but tea will do." Markus said very jolly. Martina was the same.

"I'll take care of it." Lindsey graciously told Ives and heads to the staffroom.

"You are a swimmer. You both are. I can tell." Markus said to Ives and Sue. Ives cannot not comprehend two famous but unfamiliar swimmers are in this place so familiar to him. What's more is how

much he is enjoying their company as they drink their tea telling a tale of them getting slightly lost.

The first two shows go well. There were not any mishaps. Maybe due to beginner's luck, but mainly on account of everyone chipping in to help. For example Ives's questions seemed polarised, either too easy or too hard. In the contestants' two minute-swim Coach had wrote enough, more suitable, questions for the remainder of that show. Coach does not have much time to watch television, any he does it is quizzes. A knowledgeable man, the seldom few pub-quizzes he plays Coach and his team often win. Within five minutes he had wrote enough for the next four shows. Coach approved of the gameshow, just not the timing of it. He would have preferred Ives to have done the show in fifteen years time after he has done all he wanted to in swimming. Regardless, Coach is there helping out. The passionate swimming tips Markus and Martina gave were the icing on the cake. Jimmy's skill in efficient filming were the cherry on the cake. Sue's managing of the visitors which enable them to feel like special guests was the hundred and thousands on the cake. Matt's brilliance hosting the show were the candles on the cake. And Katherine's clockwork organisational skills, taking charge and setting up of the equipment was the ribbon around the cake.

Denise had made sandwiches and baked a couple of cakes for Jimmy to bring. With the swimming done, hungry contestants and their supporters, the host and the stars struck a chord all razing the cakes.

Foreseeing the whole competition Ives expected it's essence would be the swimming. Instead tonight has quintessentially been the people. Seeing the first two famous swimmers swimming so naturally and exquisite still paled in place of their personality. The next people he met were the club swimmers as nervous as he was. Yet their personalities shone as bright as Markus and Martina's. Twelve year olds and forty year olds, who could both make him laugh then cry at their apparent long-forged tenacity. Any ounce of pride Ives had felt from his swimming achievements faded into insignificance next to the pride of being in the same race as these people, the human

race. Ives was even proud of Katherine's boldness in, albeit involuntary, vulpine flirting with gentleman-Markus.

To end the swimming and the day Ives was most inspired by the swimmers stating to the camera completing the sentence, 'I love swimming because...'

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Pack Up Your Goggles and Toys

This time Saturdays brought luck for Coynus Cads. Ives's swim was before Sue's. They had only spoken three sentences to each other the whole morning. Sue amends for her silence by her calculated cheering. Coach held none of his voice back.

Coach walking next to Ives, largely carrying him, to the changing rooms diverts him to Sue who says through the apprehension, "CHAAAAMP!" Ives smiled. Preparing himself to speak he thought of what he could offer to prepare Sue whilst Sue congratulates, "Out of everyone standing on the blocks, could see you were the most nervous. In the end that did not matter. – How did it taste?" "With all the world class swimmers it was a mashed kettle of fish. It did, it did not settle my stomach. Well until only one managed to stay with me. I still had the niggling doubts someone in the far lane had snook-by and lapped me. It is a nice clear pool so you don't have to worry about not noticing things. On the turns you can see all around, and even the reflections of people's wake, so trust yourself." Sue and Coach left Ives, now more recovered, to go and get dressed. Sue's swim is in ninety-five minutes.

The races were being compared to a swim with the A-group swimmers today in Sunderland. Although winning cannot guarantee a place, coming third would guarantee not being selected. Ives and Sue will find out when Sunderland's times are publicly compared with Sheffield's and announced later that day. Sue swimming the fifteen-hundred metres came first. She won by fifteen metres.

Consistent with their precedent Sue was more cool concerning the uncertainty of selection. To return the favour of support Ives had grazed out his voice cheering for Sue swimming the thirty fifty-metre lengths. Hovering in the stands, exhausted yet physically on a high but not taking anything for granted they talk ten-to-the-dozen as best their voices allow. After Sue had narrated her race's retrospective running-commentary Ives hoarsely says to Sue, "From beginning to end I was a nervous wreck. I did not feel mentally prepared: all due to the gameshow. Even before I got out

the pool I decided once Swimseye has ran it's course I'm going to have to be through with it. I only won by a touch. One touch. If I had taken heed of Coach's caution: I would not have had to rely on my long fingers to win. There are two things I never want to feel again. One - needlessly unprepared. That is why I was so nervous. Two - guilt. I am so sorry to you Sue for roping you into Swimseye all those months ago. It did not but it could have easily cost you your chances. I am sorry."

"Don't be daft. Glad I got chance in my life to help the community. All those people big and small given a chance to be proud of themselves. Will not swap it with the world. I have no regrets Ives. We are now a fair way through all the hard-work for the show. Proudly and with no misgivings let it finish then we can get on with our swimming."

After the long awaited medal ceremonies the medallists were the first to be given the pieces of papers with the long list of all the event's results. It was for them to scour through and find where they stood in comparison to Sunderland and if they had qualified. Sue and Ives gave their papers to Coach. Finding somewhere to look through the long list on seven sides of green A5 paper, a quiet corridor leading to the exit, as nonchalant as a human has ever been Coach tells them,

"You have both qualified." Fitting to Coach's cultivation, they take three huge strides into an open-doored disabled loo and scream as they hug each other. Sue's getting spun around screams her even louder. Coach slowly sorties past the open door, his passing outline reminding them he is on a schedule. Their considerate elation out of their system they catch Coach up. He was glad of the brief moment to himself to free his proud smile.

Coach, Sue and Ives had travelled to Sheffield via Manchester. Getting a train together to Manchester where one of Coach's contacts had offered them a lift in their thirdly fully minibus. Coach has a long weekend ahead of him. He cannot nap on the minibus, even though being picked up at half-two this coming morning keeps him trying. Sleepy, through Sue's wireless headphone splitter, the first song Sue and Ives listen to is Angel (158 BPM) by Jam & Spoon [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=thNNuSayLhY> 158 mix]. To the envy of Coach they both quickly fall asleep to the soothing song. Coach

is up early tomorrow as it is Jimmy's Scottish swim. Jimmy left Friday afternoon, cadging a lift from his Uncle and Auntie who were travelling on to camp and then climb Ben Nevis. They kindly moved their trip a weekend earlier to enable them to give Jimmy a lift. In the Lomond area Jimmy is also camping. From a map at home he chose to camp at the loch shore approximately over a mile along the shore from the race start. He is on his own as Denise is not the camping type. Coach and Denise are getting collected by Jimmy's eldest sibling at their homes. His sister realised how important this swim could be for Jimmy.

Jimmy did not expect how glad he would be to see Coach, Denise, his sister and last-minute Ives, who was able to come along to see Scotland for the first time. Mesmerised by the beauty of the Scottish hills with the first touches of the Autumn red Ives, barefooted, steps into the loch. Regardless of how Jimmy places in the race, Ives's respect goes out to him for being able to spend more than two minutes in the chilly water. Jimmy had two good night sleeps by the lake. He was pleased he came a day early to recover from the journey. He definitely could not have swam after leaving at half-two in the morning. Yesterday he had a good walk around the course. In the mid morning after his swim and breakfast Jimmy was fortunate to get chatting to the people setting out the course. Partly due to being the only person around for miles, he cheerfully took up their offer to go in the small boat with them whilst they set the marker buoys.

As in Southport Jimmy-supporters could not adequately follow the race. Unusually the race involved no laps, even the ten-kilometre swim was a straight swim five-kilometre out and five back. With binoculars, Coach is eventually able to discern two swimmers in the lead, a good twenty-five metres ahead of the white water that is more visible. It took five minutes of binocular sharing before any one would hazard a guess if Jimmy was one of the leading two. Jimmy had taught Sue how to facilitate maintaining the head position of pool swimmers and remain on target. He thinks open-water swimmers hold their heads too high too often and so adding drag and inefficiencies.

"One of the leaders, to the left, is keeping his head down." Coach

bravely mentions as he wipes his own glasses. As the swimmers advance, Coach's concoction of hope and deliberation makes him even more vocal that it could be Jimmy. Standing shore-side in a tight line of four they are only twenty-metres from the finish board. More and more sure they cheer the swimmers now in audible range. Strangers or not, they are still in the lead. Closer and closer, the last ten seconds they cannot be sure. They are unable to make out Jimmy's number on either of the caps. They cheer louder. The one they think is Jimmy is half a body length in the lead. His stroke has changed as they both are sprinting and sighting the overhead board they need to strike. Even as the assistants pull the pink faced stumbling swimmers out of the water it is two seconds before they can tell. Coach has been trying to listen to the official tracking station two metres away from them. The tracking team don't speak: engrossed with the writing on their laptop screens. Coach makes a sigh of relief, he recognises the winner to be Jimmy. Denise is the first to say it,

"It is JIMMY!" All of them jog the seven-metres to the opening in the roped cordon where the swimmers will leave. The officials under Jimmy's arms pass Jimmy to Coach and Ives.

"You won Jimmy. You won!" Jimmy does not respond save a cramped smile. It took Jimmy fifteen minutes to become compus mentus again. He would later go on to explain with the race being so long he had no idea if anyone had gotten away from him. He had decided to swim as fast as he could and to make sure he beat the person next to him. The runner-up who was swimming next to Jimmy comes out of his way to find and congratulate Jimmy. He turned out to be Welsh swimmer David Davies who Jimmy had recently met at the third Swimquisition. Jimmy's win automatically place him in the National Squad.

Katherine's first aquathlon was the same Sunday as Jimmy's swim. To her friends it would have been a well deserved trip abroad for them all if they were able to go and watch her. Even if her swim was the following weekend there was a financial barrier. At the the eleventh hour Katherine's Dad paid for her National tri-suit, the entry fee, the accommodation and the flight.

All the national age groupers were racing in their separate groups. In her age group Katherine was first out of the water. Only seconds behind her was her team-mate who wily had been getting an easier

ride in Katherine's slipstream the whole swim. Katherine admires and looks up to this more experienced team-mate. Under the overcast sky the two team-mates quickly ran the Swiss girl down who having a lot less ground to cover through the transition area had managed to turn-around her twenty-second deficit. From far behind at the swim, a German girl, who by next month's birthday will take her out of Katherine's category, caught the leading British duo five minutes from the finish. To the pain of Katherine her best running could not keep up with the German girl. Katherine's team-mate who was still behind Katherine's shoulder did not put any effort into an attempt. At the end of the race, maybe due to nerves or inexperience, after leading her team-mate the whole of the race, Katherine was pipped at the post by her into third place. For her first official GB aquathlon Katherine done herself, her nation and Coynus Cads proud. She even got her name in the local paper again.

Swimquisition went well through the next two months. There are two teams that have cancelled and two have postponed hoping to take part later in the year. As a replacement a Welsh club, the Jasconiusians, were very obliging to move up their scheduled attendance. Bridgert stepped-in the second time. Reinforcing Sue and Coach's hesitance over Coynus Cads swimming, it dawned on Ives that Coynus Cads could not compete as an entity even if he wanted them to. Ives needed all the adults to help. Against a Kent club that could only manage one adult, his friends also conscious they are indispensable suggested using Sam a Bridgert swimmer and three Coynus kids picked out of a hat. This appeased Ives's insistence that the kid's from Coynus Cads should not miss out. The celebrities were all very professional and reliable. All of them, without being asked to, brought signed photographs and other items to give away. Ives felt that the prizes given to the first and second placed groups were respectable. The celebrity swimmers were all asked to recruit any of their friends to help out with the contests down the line as they were short. Within in a month and a half of filming only one group was able to out swim the professional swimmer. A team from Manchester. Pure Bridgert did not win their heat. The Coynus-Bridgert union did win the heat.

A few more, successful Swimquisitions were held then one Saturday, not long after Halloween Ives got a message through his webpage. A

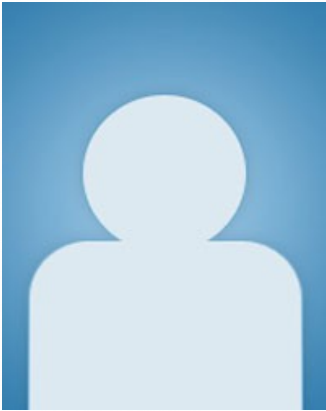
television company wanted to buy the rights to his gameshow. A week later, as an early Christmas gift a correspondence email made it apparent that Ives was going to paid a large sum of money for the rights to the show. In the region of a large lottery win. Resembling Ives's initial fantasy, they could also see the show's international appeal. Halfway into January Ives had swapped all his ideas for a bank-transfer and a promise in nine months time there is going to be a United Kingdom show. Airing a week after the UK show, a Chinese Swimquisition will be shown to a third of a billion viewers. Also he was told plans included an American Swimquisition, an Australian Swimquisition and fittingly Swimquisition Español - Spanish Swimquisition. For now, Ives still had four shows to complete the total of sixteen shows. From the initial plan eight teams had pulled out. Not allowed to call it Swimquisition any longer, the last two events proudly resurrected the name 'Swimseye'.

Ives had kept a note of who had helped with the gameshow over the year. Once the money had become available the first thing he did was to recompense all these people. He gave each Lifeguard who volunteered a lot more than their normal wages. He gave Paul the Lifeguard, who helped out in additional ways, even more. As too Zoe and Mark. The pool was given triple the fee they initially wavered. No-one as best as Ives and Sue could tell was forgotten. For the celebrities who came and helped he gave them all a few thousand to donate to their charities. For the large amount remaining he split it evenly six ways: to Coach, Jimmy, Sue, Katherine, Matt and himself. As suggested by Sue, they then all donated some money to their club, Coynus Cads, so for over twenty years any swimmer will only have to pay a tiny token amount. Not a great amount but they also sent some money to all the clubs that originally competed in their gameshow. Insubordinately they paid a plumber two-hundred and twenty pounds to mend the broken showers. Katherine feeling both like an adult and an excited six year old bought herself a much warranted road bike to train on.

As promised Ives bought a yacht to live on which he moored near the city centre. For as long as they wanted, everyone was welcome to stay on the modest refurbished boat he renamed Swimseye. None of them except Coach had nearly enough to retire off. It was enough for them to make their and their families' lives a lot more comfortable or use it to continue endeavouring to make the world a better place. For now, in the latest pool session on Ives's birthday in February they all train with a lot still to swim for.

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